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(54) **Cartridge and image forming apparatus provided therewith**

Kartusche und Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung damit

Cartouche et appareil de formation d'image équipé de celle-ci

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a cartridge to be used in an electro-photographic type image forming apparatus, and to an image forming apparatus provided with the cartridge.

[0002] From US 2007/0122165 A1 there is known an image forming apparatus and a developer cartridge for such image forming apparatus, wherein a light traveling permissible portion and a light traveling blocking portion are alternately disposed in a specification detecting and agitator driving gear such that a detection portion detects information corresponding to the maximum image formation sheet number. When the developer cartridge is new, a new/used cartridge detecting gear restricts transmission of the aforementioned information from the specification detecting and agitator driving gear to the detection portion for a predetermined time t , thereby detecting whether the developer cartridge is new or the used. The detection portion detects whether the developer cartridge is mounted based on whether there is the detection light reflected from the light traveling permissible portion.

[0003] From EP 1 950 625 A2 there is known a developer cartridge for an image forming apparatus, which includes a main body, and a developer cartridge configured to be attachable to and detachable from the main body. The developer cartridge includes a rotational body provided to be rotatable in one direction, and a movable member provided to the rotational body at a position distanced from a rotational axis of the rotational body and configured to move in response to rotation of the rotational body. The main body includes a drive device configured to rotate the rotational body, a detector configured to detect a movement of the movable member in response to the rotation of the rotational body, and a determiner configured to determine whether the developer cartridge is a new one in accordance with the presence or absence of the movement of the movable member detected by the detector and determine a type of the developer cartridge in accordance with a time required between when the driving of the drive device starts and when the detector detects the movement of the movable member.

[0004] From US 2003/0185579 A1 there is known a use status detecting mechanism for an image forming apparatus, wherein the use status detecting mechanism includes a cover having an edge portion, in a portion of which a notch is formed, a moving member having a rod member, a spring portion, protrusions and grooves, and a shaft having a driving gear and ribs. In the unused state of a developing unit, the rod member is maintained to be exposed by the contact of the protrusions with the edge portion from the outside. When the developing unit is started to be used and rotation is transmitted to the driving gear, the moving member is rotated by the engagement of the ribs and the grooves, and the moving member is moved to the shaft side by the elastic force of the spring portion when the protrusions are opposed to the notches.

Thus, the rod member is retreated from the exposed position.

[0005] From EP 2 506 087 A1 there is known a developing cartridge for an image forming apparatus, wherein the cartridge includes a housing, a driving input member provided at the housing wherein the driving input member is configured to be rotated by an externally supplied rotation driving force, and a rotational member configured to receive the rotation driving force, which is transmitted from the driving input member, and is rotated thereby. The cartridge may also include a detection protrusion provided at a position away from a rotational center of the rotational member. The detection protrusion may include a main body protruding from the rotational member away from the housing and a pivot part configured to pivot relative to the main body. The detection protrusion may be configured to be changeable between an extended state and a collapsed state with respect to the rotational member.

[0006] From US 2011/0211866 A1 there is known an image forming device, which includes a main body, a support unit, a driving unit, a developer cartridge, a moving member, a transmitting member, and a detection member. The support unit can be pulled out from the main body in a removing direction. The developer cartridge is detachably mounted in the support unit and has a driving member. The driving member is driven by the driving unit when the developer cartridge is mounted in the support unit. The moving member moves when the driving member is driven by the driving unit. The transmitting member is provided to the support unit and is rotatable about a rotational axis which extends perpendicular to the removing direction and a longitudinal direction of a photosensitive member. When the moving member contacts the transmitting member, the transmitting member rotates. The detection member detects a rotation of the transmitting member.

[0007] As an electro-photographic type image forming apparatus, a printer including a photosensitive body and a developing cartridge configured to supply toner to the photosensitive body is known.

[0008] A conventional printer is provided with a detection device for detecting information of the developing cartridge assembled therein, for example, for detecting whether or not the assembled developing cartridge is a brand new cartridge.

[0009] Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 2006-267994 proposes a laser printer that detects rotation of a detection gear provided in a developing cartridge using an actuator provided in a main casing and that determines information on the developing cartridge based on a detection result.

[0010] In the above laser printer, the detection gear has an abutment protrusion corresponding to the information on the developing cartridge. The detection gear is rotated by a predetermined driving amount after assembly of the developing cartridge to the main casing. At this time, the abutment protrusion abuts on the actu-

ator, allowing the rotation of the detection gear to be detected by the actuator.

[0011] However, in the laser printer described above, the developing cartridge only has the detection gear for allowing the main casing to detect the information on the developing cartridge.

[0012] Additionally, substantially the entire part of the detection gear is covered by a gear cover, which lowers visibility of the detection gear from outside the apparatus.

[0013] Therefore, a user who does not have knowledge of the new cartridge detection device has a difficulty in determining whether the developing cartridge is a new one or a used one.

[0014] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a cartridge allowing a user to easily determine whether the cartridge is unused or used and an image forming apparatus provided with the cartridge.

[0015] The object of the present invention is attained by a cartridge according to claim 1. Further developments of the invention are specified in the dependent claims.

[0016] In the drawings:

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a printer according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a developing cartridge accommodated in the printer shown in Fig. 1 as viewed from a diagonally front left side;

Fig. 3 is an exploded perspective view of the developing cartridge of Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a left side view of a cartridge frame of the developing cartridge of Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 is a left side view of the cartridge frame of Fig. 4 at which a gear train is disposed;

Fig. 6 is a perspective view of an agitator gear of the developing cartridge of Fig. 3 as viewed from a left side;

Fig. 7 is a perspective view of a gear cover of the developing cartridge of Fig. 3 as viewed from a diagonally rear right side;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view of a shutter of the developing cartridge of Fig. 3 as viewed from a diagonally rear right side;

Fig. 9 is a view for description of relative positional relationship among the gear cover, the shutter, and the agitator gear;

Figs. 10A and 10B are views for description of movement of the shutter; and in which Fig. 10A shows a state where the shutter is at a covered position, and Fig. 10B shows a state where the shutter is at the exposed position;

Figs. 11A and 11B are views for description of a new cartridge detecting operation; and in which Fig. 11A shows a state where a detection unit is at a new cartridge detection position and the shutter is at the covered position, and Fig. 11 B shows a state where the detection unit is at the new cartridge detection position and the shutter is at the exposed position; Figs. 12A and 12B are views for description of a car-

tridge type detecting operation; and in which Fig. 12A shows a state where the detection unit is at a cartridge type detection position and a right end portion of a probe is in abutment with an agitator gear, and Fig. 12B shows a state where the detection unit is at the cartridge type detection position and the right end portion of the probe is inside a detected opening formed in the agitator gear;

Figs. 13A and 13B are views for description of detection by an empty sensor unit; and in which Fig. 13A shows a toner amount detection for a remaining amount of toner in a toner chamber, and Fig. 13B shows a position detection of an agitator;

Fig. 14A is a perspective view of an agitator gear according to one modification; in which the agitator gear is formed with two detected openings; and Fig. 14B is a perspective view of an agitator gear according to another modification; in which the agitator gear is provided with two detected protrusions.

[0017] A printer as an image forming apparatus according to one embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to Figs. 1 through 13A. Throughout the specification, the terms "upward", "downward", "upper", "lower", "above", "below", "beneath", "right", "left", "front", "rear" and the like will be used assuming that the image forming apparatus is disposed in an orientation in which it is intended to be used. More specifically, in Fig. 1 a left side and a right side are a front side and a rear side, respectively.

1. Overall Structure of Color Printer

[0018] Referring to Fig. 1, the printer 1 is a horizontal direct tandem type color printer. The printer 1 includes a main casing 2 having a generally box shape. The main casing 2 has an upper portion provided with a top cover 4 which can be opened or closed for opening and closing an opening 3. The top cover 4 has a rear end portion pivotally movably supported to the main casing 2. The printer 1 includes four process cartridges 5.

[0019] Each process cartridge 5 is detachable from and attachable to the main casing 2. When mounted, the process cartridges 5 are juxtaposedly arrayed in the frontward/rearward direction at intervals within the main casing 2. The four process cartridges 5 corresponds to four colors different from each other (black, yellow, magenta, and cyan), respectively.

[0020] Each process cartridge 5 includes a drum cartridge 6 and a developing cartridge 7 as a claimed cartridge detachable from and attachable to the drum cartridge 6.

[0021] Each drum cartridge 6 has a photosensitive drum 8. The photosensitive drum 8 is cylindrical in shape and extends in a lateral direction (rightward/leftward direction), and is rotatably supported to a frame of the drum cartridge 6.

[0022] Further, the drum cartridge 6 has a scorotron

charger 9 and an LED unit 10. The scorotron charger 9 is positioned diagonally above and rearward of the photosensitive drum 8, and confronts the photosensitive drum 8. The LED unit 10 is positioned above the photosensitive drum 8, and confronts the photosensitive drum 8.

[0023] The developing cartridge 7 has a developing roller 11 and a supply roller 12 adapted to supply toner to the developing roller 11.

[0024] The developing roller 11 has a rotation shaft extending in the lateral direction. The developing roller 11 is rotatably supported in a rear end portion of the developing cartridge 7 such that each lateral end portion of the rotation shaft is rotatably supported to each side wall 33 of a cartridge frame 31 (Fig. 2, described later) of the developing cartridge 7. A rear edge of the developing roller 11 is exposed to an outside through a rear edge of the developing cartridge 7 and contacts the corresponding photosensitive drum 8 from an upper front side thereof.

[0025] The supply roller 12 has a rotation shaft extending in the lateral direction. The supply roller 12 is rotatably supported in the developing cartridge 7 such that each lateral end portion of the rotation shaft is rotatably supported to each side wall 33 of the cartridge frame 31 (described later). The supply roller 12 is disposed diagonally above and frontward of the developing roller 11 and in contact therewith.

[0026] The developing cartridge 7 is provided with a layer thickness regulation blade 13, a toner chamber 14 and an agitator 15. The layer thickness regulation blade 13 is adapted to regulate a thickness of a toner layer supplied to the developing roller 11. The toner chamber 14 is positioned above the developing roller 11 and the supply roller 12. The toner chamber 14 accommodates toner as a developing agent therein.

[0027] The agitator 15 as an agitation member is provided in the toner chamber 14 for agitating the toner. The agitator 15 includes an agitator shaft 16 extending in the lateral direction (i.e. a predetermined direction) and agitation blades 17 extending radially toward an inner circumferential surface of the toner chamber 14 from the agitator shaft 16. The agitator 15 is adapted to rotate about an axis A as a claimed rotation axis (Fig. 3) of the agitator shaft 16. That is, the agitator 15 is an example of rotation body.

[0028] Toner accommodated in the toner chamber 14 is subjected to triboelectric charging to have a positive polarity between the supply roller 12 and the developing roller 11. The toner is carried on an outer peripheral surface of the developing roller 11 in a form of a thin toner layer having a uniform thickness by the layer thickness regulation blade 13.

[0029] After an outer peripheral surface of the photosensitive drum 8 is uniformly charged by the scorotron charger 9, the surface is exposed to light by the LED unit 10 based on a predetermined image data to form an electrostatic latent image on the surface. Then, a visible toner

image (developing agent image) corresponding to the electrostatic latent image is formed on the outer peripheral surface of the photosensitive drum 8 by supplying toner carried on the developing roller 11 to the corresponding photosensitive drum 8.

[0030] A sheet cassette 18 is provided at a bottom portion of the main casing 2 for accommodating sheets P therein in a stacked state. Each sheet P accommodated in the sheet cassette 18 is passed through a U-shaped passage and is conveyed diagonally upward and rearward to a position between the photosensitive drum 8 and a conveyor belt 19 at a prescribed timing by various rollers. Then, each sheet P is conveyed rearward by the conveyor belt 19 at a position between each photosensitive drum 8 and each transfer roller 20. At this time, the toner image is transferred onto the sheet P.

[0031] The sheet P onto which the toner image has been transferred is then conveyed to a fixing unit provided downstream of the conveyor belt 19. The fixing unit includes a heat roller 21 and a pressure roller 22. The toner image is thermally fixed to the sheet P when the sheet P passes through the heat roller 21 and the pressure roller 22. The sheet P carrying the toner image is then conveyed through an U-shaped passage frontward and upward, and is discharged onto a discharge tray 23 provided at the top cover 4.

2. Details of Developing Cartridge

[0032] As shown in Figs. 2 and 3, the developing cartridge 7 includes a cartridge frame 31 as a claimed frame and a drive unit 32 positioned at a left side of the cartridge frame 31.

[0033] When referring to the directions in the description of the developing cartridge 7, the terms "upward", "downward", "upper", "lower", "above", "below", "beneath", "right", "left", "front", "rear" and the like will be used assuming that the developing cartridge 7 is detached from the main casing 2 and placed on a horizontal plane. Specifically, a side on which the developing roller 11 is disposed is defined as the rear side, and a side on which the layer thickness regulation blade 13 is disposed is defined as the upper side.

(1) Cartridge Frame

[0034] The cartridge frame 31 extends in the lateral direction and is generally box shaped, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3. The cartridge frame 31 includes the pair of side walls 33, a front wall 34, a lower wall 35 and an upper wall 36. The pair of side walls 33 includes a left side wall 33L and a right side wall 33R.

[0035] Each side wall 33 extends in the frontward/rearward direction and in the vertical direction, and is generally rectangular shaped in a side view. The pair of side walls 33 is spaced away from each other in the lateral direction. The left side wall 33L is formed with an agitator shaft exposure hole 37, and a detection window 38, as

shown in Fig. 3.

[0036] The agitator shaft exposure hole 37 is formed for exposing the agitator shaft 16 to the outside there-through. The agitator shaft exposure hole 37 is positioned at a generally center portion of the left side wall 33L in the frontward/rearward direction and is generally circular shaped in a side view. The agitator shaft exposure hole 37 is penetrated through a thickness of the left side wall 33L and has a diameter greater than an outer diameter of a left end portion of the agitator shaft 16. The left end portion of the agitator shaft 16 extends through the agitator shaft exposure hole 37 and protrudes laterally outward from the left side wall 33L.

[0037] The detection window 38 is formed in the left side wall 33L and positioned adjacent to the agitator shaft exposure hole 37. More specifically, the detection window 38 is positioned diagonally below and frontward of the agitator shaft exposure hole 37. The detection window 38 is a generally circular shaped in a side view. The detection window 38 is penetrated through a thickness of the left side wall 33L. The detection window 38 is closed by a transparent resin plate.

[0038] The agitator shaft 16 has a right end portion which is rotatably supported to the right side wall 33R. Further, the right side wall 33R is formed with a detection window (not shown) similar to the detection window 38 formed in the left side wall 33L. The detection window of the right side wall 33R is superposed with the detection window 38 of the left side wall 33L when projected in the lateral direction.

[0039] The front wall 34 extends in the lateral direction and is spanned between front end portions of the side walls 33. The lower wall 35 extends in the lateral direction and is spanned between lower end portions of the side walls 33 such that the lower wall 35 is connected to a lower end portion of the front wall 34. The upper wall 36 extends in the lateral direction and is spanned between upper end portions of the side walls 33 such that the upper wall 36 is connected to an upper end portion of the front wall 34.

(2) Drive Unit

[0040] As shown in Figs. 3 and 5, the drive unit 32 includes a gear train 41 as a claimed driving force transmission unit and a gear cover 42 for covering the gear train 41.

(2-1) Gear Train

[0041] The gear train 41 includes a developing gear 43, a supply gear 44, a developing coupling 45, an idle gear 46, and an agitator gear 47. The gear train 41 is adapted to transmit a driving force from the main casing 2 to the agitator 15.

[0042] The developing gear 43 is assembled to a left side of the left side wall 33L of the cartridge frame 31. The developing gear 43 is fixedly coupled to a left end

portion of the rotation shaft of the developing roller 11 protruding leftward from the left side wall 33L such that relative rotation therebetween is prevented.

[0043] The supply gear 44 is assembled to the left side of the left side wall 33L of the cartridge frame 31. The supply gear 44 is fixedly coupled to a left end portion of the rotation shaft of the supply roller 12 protruding leftward from the left side wall 33L such that relative rotation therebetween is prevented. The supply gear 44 is positioned below and spaced apart from the developing gear 43.

[0044] The developing coupling 45 is rotatably supported to the left side wall 33L of the cartridge frame 31 and positioned frontward of the developing gear 43. The developing coupling 45 is generally cylindrical shaped extending in the lateral direction. The developing coupling 45 integrally includes a large-diameter gear portion 48, a small-diameter gear portion 49, and a coupling portion 50.

[0045] The large-diameter gear portion 48 is provided at a right end portion of the developing coupling 45. Gear teeth are provided along the entire circumferential surface of the large-diameter gear portion 48. The large-diameter gear portion 48 is meshingly engaged with the developing gear 43 from a front side thereof.

[0046] The small-diameter gear portion 49 is generally cylindrical shaped extending leftward continuously from a left end portion of the large-diameter gear portion 48 and coaxial with the large-diameter gear portion 48. The small-diameter gear portion 49 has an outer diameter smaller than that of the large-diameter gear portion 48. Gear teeth are provided along the entire circumferential surface of the small-diameter gear portion 49. The small-diameter gear portion 49 is meshingly engaged with the supply gear 44 from an upper-front side thereof.

[0047] The coupling portion 50 is generally cylindrical shaped extending leftward continuously from a left end portion of the small-diameter gear portion 49 and coaxial with the large-diameter gear portion 48. The coupling portion 50 has an outer diameter smaller than that of the small-diameter gear portion 49. The coupling portion 50 has a left side surface provided with a fitting portion 51. In a state where the developing cartridge 7 is assembled to the main casing 2, a leading end portion of a main coupling (not shown) provided to the main casing 2 is fixedly coupled to the fitting portion 51 such that relative rotation therebetween is prevented. A driving force from the main casing 2 is transmitted to the fitting portion 51 through the main coupling (not shown).

[0048] The idle gear 46 is rotatably supported to the left side wall 33L of the cartridge frame 31 at a front side of the developing coupling 45. The idle gear 46 is generally disk shaped having a thickness in the lateral direction. The idle gear 46 integrally includes a large-diameter portion 52 and a small-diameter portion 53.

[0049] The large-diameter portion 52 constitutes a left half portion of the idle gear 46. The large-diameter portion 52 is generally disk shaped having gear teeth formed

along the entire circumference thereof. The large-diameter portion 52 is meshingly engaged with the small-diameter gear portion 49 of the developing coupling 45 from a lower-front side thereof.

[0050] The small-diameter portion 53 constitutes a right half portion of the idle gear 46 and is coaxial with the large-diameter portion 52. The small-diameter portion 53 is generally disk shaped having gear teeth formed along the entire circumference thereof. The small-diameter portion 53 is disposed diagonally below and frontward of the large-diameter gear portion 48 of the developing coupling 45 and spaced apart therefrom.

[0051] The agitator gear 47 is fixedly coupled to a left end portion of the agitator shaft 16 protruding leftward from the left side wall 33L such that relative rotation therebetween is prevented. The agitator gear 47 is rotatably supported to the left side wall 33L of the cartridge frame 31 through the agitator shaft 16. The agitator gear 47 is meshingly engaged with the small-diameter portion 53 of the idle gear 46 from an upper front side thereof.

[0052] More specifically, as illustrated in Fig. 6, the agitator gear 47 is formed with a fitting hole 54 in which the agitator shaft 16 is fitted and a detected opening 55 as a claimed detected portion.

[0053] The fitting hole 54 is positioned at a radially substantially center portion of the agitator gear 47. The fitting hole 54 is generally D-shaped in a side view and penetrated through a thickness of the agitator gear 47 in the lateral direction. The left end portion of the agitator shaft 16 is generally D-shaped in correspondence with the shape of the fitting hole 54, and non-rotatably fitted into the fitting hole 54 so that relative rotation between the agitator gear 47 and the agitator shaft 16 is prevented.

[0054] The detected opening 55 is positioned between the gear teeth of the agitator gear 47 and the fitting hole 54. The detected opening 55 is an opening penetrating a thickness of the agitator gear 47 in the lateral direction. The detected opening 55 has a generally arcuate shape extending in a circumferential direction of the agitator gear 47. The detected opening 55 is defined by an upstream surface 56 and a downstream surface 57. The upstream surface 56 is positioned upstream of the downstream surface 57 in a clockwise direction in a left side view. The upstream surface 56 is inclined diagonally rightward in a direction from an upstream end to a downstream end of the upstream surface 56 in the clockwise direction in a left side view. The downstream surface 57 is inclined diagonally leftward from an upstream end to a downstream end of the downstream surface 57 in the clockwise direction in a left side view.

(2-2) Gear Cover

[0055] As shown in Fig. 3, the gear cover 42 includes a main portion 61 and a shutter 62 as a claimed moving member.

[0056] As shown in Figs. 3 and 7, the main portion 61 is generally hollow prismatic body shaped and extends

in the lateral direction with its leftmost end being closed. The main portion 61 includes a collar portion 63, a support portion 66, and a regulation portion 67. Further, the main portion 61 is formed with a detection opening 64 and an exposure opening 65.

[0057] The collar portion 63 is positioned at a rear end portion of a left wall of the main portion 61 and protrudes leftward from the left wall of the main portion 61. The collar portion 63 is generally hollow cylindrical shaped with its right end portion being in communication with an internal space of the main portion 61.

[0058] The coupling portion 50 of the developing coupling 45 extends through the collar portion 63 and is rotatable relative to the collar portion 63. The fitting portion 51 of the coupling portion 50 is exposed to the outside through a left end portion of the collar portion 63.

[0059] The detection opening 64 is generally circular shaped in a side view. The detection opening 64 is positioned at a generally center portion of the left wall of the main portion 61 in the frontward/rearward direction such that the detection opening 64 confronts a lower front end portion of the agitator gear 47 from a left side thereof. The detection opening 64 is penetrated through a thickness of the left wall of the main portion 61.

[0060] The exposure opening 65 is generally square shaped in a front view. The exposure opening 65 is positioned at a lower end portion of a front wall of the main portion 61. The exposure opening 65 is penetrated through a thickness of the front wall of the main portion 61.

[0061] The support portion 66 is generally rectangular shaped in a side view and elongated in the frontward/rearward direction. The support portion 66 is disposed at a right surface side of the left wall of the main portion 61 and at a rear side of a lower end portion of the exposure opening 65. The support portion 66 protrudes upward from a lower wall of the main portion 61.

[0062] The regulation portion 67 is a protrusion protruding rightward from the left wall of the main portion 61 and extending in the frontward/rearward direction. The regulation portion 67 is disposed at the right surface side of the left wall of the main portion 61 and at a rear side of an upper end portion of the exposure opening 65.

[0063] As shown in Figs. 3 and 8, the shutter 62 integrally includes a slider 71 as a claimed partially untoothed gear, a display portion 73, and a cover portion 72.

[0064] The slider 71 is generally flat plate shaped extending in the frontward/rearward direction. Gear teeth are provided at an upper surface of a rear end portion of the slider 71. In the slider 71, a portion where gear teeth are provided will be referred to as a toothed portion 74, and a portion where gear teeth are not provided will be referred to as an untoothed portion 75.

[0065] The display portion 73 is generally rectangular flat-plate shaped in a front view extending continuously from a front end portion of the slider 71 and inclined diagonally upward toward a front side of the display portion 73.

[0066] The cover portion 72 is generally rectangular

flat-plate shaped in a side view extending upward continuously from left end portions of the slider 71 and the display portion 73.

[0067] As shown in Fig. 9, within the main portion 61, the shutter 62 is slidably mounted on the support portion 66 of the main portion 61 such that the cover portion 72 is positioned between the support portion 66 and regulation portion 67.

[0068] This configuration allows the shutter 62 to move to a covered position (Fig. 10A) and to an exposed position (Fig. 10B). At the covered position, the shutter 62 covers the lower front end portion of the agitator gear 47. At the exposed position, the shutter 62 allows the lower front end portion of the agitator gear 47 to be exposed to the outside.

[0069] When the shutter 62 is at the covered position (Fig. 10A), the cover portion 72 of the shutter 62 is interposed between the detection opening 64 and the lower front end portion of the agitator gear 47. Further, the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is retracted rearward from the exposure opening 65 of the main portion 61. Further, the toothed portion 74 of the shutter 62 is meshingly engaged with a lower end portion of the agitator gear 47.

[0070] When the shutter 62 is at the exposed position (Fig. 10B), the cover portion 72 of the shutter 62 is advanced frontward from a position between the detection window 64 and the lower front end portion of the agitator gear 47. At this time, the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is exposed to the outside (a front side of the exposure opening 65) through the exposure opening 65 of the main portion 61. Further, the toothed portion 74 of the shutter 62 is positioned frontward of the lower end portion of the agitator gear 47 and spaced apart therefrom.

3. Main Casing

[0071] As shown in Figs. 2, 11A, 11B, 12A, and 12B, a detection unit 78, an empty sensor unit 79, and a CPU 82 as a judgment unit are provided within the main casing 2.

[0072] The detection unit 78 is positioned at a left side of the developing cartridge 7 within the main casing 2. As shown in Figs. 11A through 12B, the detection unit 78 includes a slide member 84, a probe 87, an actuator 88, and a photo-sensor 89.

[0073] The slide member 84 is a generally rectangular flat plate shaped extending in the vertical direction. The slide member 84 is slidably movable in the lateral direction by a moving mechanism (not shown).

[0074] The probe 87 is generally cylindrical shaped extending in the lateral direction. The probe 87 is movably supported in the slide member 84. The probe 87 is slidably movable in the lateral direction to an advanced position (Figs. 11B and 12B) and to a retracted position (Figs. 11A and 12A). At the advanced position, the probe 87 is advanced rightward, and at the retracted position, the probe 87 is retracted leftward from the advanced po-

sition. The probe 87 is connected to a compression coil spring 86, so that the probe 87 is normally urged rightward by the compression coil spring 86 so as to be positioned at the advanced position.

[0075] The actuator 88 integrally includes a pivot shaft 91, an abutment lever 92, and a light shielding lever 93. The pivot shaft 91 extends in the frontward/rearward direction and is generally hollow cylindrical shaped. The abutment lever 92 extends upward from the pivot shaft 91. The light shielding lever 93 extends downward from the pivot shaft 91. The light shielding lever 93 has a lower end portion provided with a light shielding plate 94 extending in the lateral direction.

[0076] The actuator 88 is supported to the slide member 84 and pivotally movable relative to the slide member 84 about the pivot shaft 91.

[0077] The actuator 88 is pivotally movable to a light transmitting position (Figs. 11B and 12B) and to a light shielding position (Figs. 11A and 12A). At the light transmitting position, the abutment lever 92 is directed diagonally upward and rightward and the light shielding lever 93 is directed diagonally downward and leftward. At the light shielding position, the abutment lever 92 and the light shielding lever 93 are directed in the vertical direction.

[0078] The photo-sensor 89 includes a light emitting portion 95 and a light receiving portion 96. The light emitting portion 95 is adapted to emit a light. The light receiving portion 96 is adapted to receive the light from the light emitting portion 95 and positioned in confrontation with and downward of the light emitting portion 95 with a gap therebetween. The photo-sensor 89 is positioned below the actuator 88 such that the light shielding plate 94 of the actuator 88 at the light shielding position is positioned between the light emitting portion 95 and the light receiving portion 96 in the vertical direction.

[0079] At the light shielding position of the actuator 88, the light shielding plate 94 of the actuator 88 is positioned between the light emitting portion 95 and the light receiving portion 96, so that the light emitted from the light emitting portion 95 of the photo-sensor 89 is blocked by the light shielding plate 94 of the light shielding lever 93, whereupon an ON signal is outputted from the photo-sensor 89.

[0080] On the other hand, at the light transmitting position of the actuator 88, the light shielding plate 94 of the actuator 88 is retracted leftward from the gap between the light emitting portion 95 and the light receiving portion 96. Thus, the light emitted from the light emitting portion 95 of the photo-sensor 89 is received by the light receiving portion 96. At this time, an ON signal is not outputted from the photo-sensor 89.

[0081] Further, the detection unit 78 is movable within the main casing 2 to a new cartridge detection position (Figs. 11A and 11B) and to a cartridge type detection position (Figs. 12A and 12B). At the new cartridge detection position, the detection unit 78 detects whether the developing cartridge 7 is new or used. At the cartridge

type detection position, the detection unit 78 detects types of the developing cartridge 7.

[0082] As shown in Fig. 2, the empty sensor unit 79 includes a light emitting element 80 and a light receiving element 81.

[0083] The light emitting element 80 is positioned within the main casing 2 and in confrontation with the detection opening 64 of the gear cover 42 from a left side thereof. The light emitting element 80 is adapted to emit a detection light to the detection opening 64.

[0084] The light receiving element 81 is positioned within the main casing 2 and in confrontation with the detection window (not shown) of the right side wall 33R of the cartridge frame 31 from a right side thereof. The light receiving element 81 outputs an ON signal upon receipt of the detection light emitted from the light emitting element 80.

[0085] A combination of the detection unit 78 and the empty sensor unit 79 constitutes a claimed detection unit.

[0086] The CPU 82 is electrically connected to the photo-sensor 89 and the light receiving element 81 so as to receive the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 and the ON signal from the light receiving element 81.

4. Operation for Detecting New Developing Cartridge

[0087] An operation for detecting a new developing cartridge 7 will be described. Note that, in the present embodiment, when the developing cartridge 7 is an unused (new) cartridge, the shutter 62 is at the covered position. That is, the covered position of the shutter 62 indicates that the developing cartridge 7 is unused (new).

[0088] In order to assemble the unused developing cartridge 7 into the main casing 2, the unused developing cartridge 7 is first attached to the drum cartridge 6.

[0089] At this time, a user looks at the gear cover 42 of the developing cartridge 7 to confirm that the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is not exposed to the outside through the exposure opening 65. Thus, the user can determine that the developing cartridge 7 is unused. In order to let the user know how to determine whether the developing cartridge 7 is new or used, for example, the following description is given in an instruction manual of the printer 1: the developing cartridge 7 is unused in a case where the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is not exposed to the outside through the exposure opening 65, while the developing cartridge 7 is in a used state in a case where the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is exposed to the outside through the exposure opening 65. The user may determine a used or unused state of the developing cartridge 7 by looking at the shutter 62 as to whether the shutter 62 is visible or invisible through the detection opening 64.

[0090] Then, in order to assemble the unused developing cartridge 7 into the main casing 2, the top cover 4 of the main casing 2 is opened to insert, from diagonally above and frontward thereof, into the main casing 2 the process cartridge 5 to which the unused developing car-

tridge 7 is assembled. After the process cartridge 5 is inserted into the main casing 2, the top cover 4 is closed. In association with closing movement of the top cover 4, the main coupling (not shown) provided in the main casing 2 is coupled to the developing coupling 45, preventing relative rotation therebetween.

[0091] As shown in Fig. 11A, the detection unit 78 is positioned at the new cartridge detection position before the main coupling (not shown) is driven.

[0092] Then, a right end portion of the probe 87 is brought into contact with the cover portion 72 of the shutter 62 from a left side thereof through the detection opening 64 of the main portion 61.

[0093] Then, the probe 87 is pressed leftward against the urging force of the compression coil spring 86 to be positioned at the retracted position. At the same time, the actuator 88 is pivotally moved in the counterclockwise direction in a front view to be positioned at the light shielding position

[0094] As a result, the photo-sensor 89 outputs the ON signal to the CPU 82. That is, the detection unit 78 detects the covered position of the shutter 62.

[0095] Then, the CPU 82 determines that the shutter 62 has been positioned at the covered position upon receipt of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 in a state where the detection unit 78 is at the new cartridge detection position.

[0096] Then, a driving force from the main casing 2 is transmitted to the developing coupling 45 through the main coupling (not shown) for starting a warm-up operation. Then, a driving force from the developing coupling 45 is transmitted to the agitator gear 47 through the gear train 41. As a result of rotation of the agitator gear 47 in the counterclockwise direction in a left side view, the agitator 15 is rotated in the counterclockwise direction in a left side view.

[0097] At the same time, the counterclockwise rotation of the agitator gear 47 in a left side view causes the shutter 62 to move from the covered position to the exposed position.

[0098] Then, as shown in Fig. 11B, the cover portion 72 of the shutter 62 is retracted frontward from a position between the detection opening 64 and the lower front end portion of the agitator gear 47, and the probe 87 is pressed rightward by the urging force of the compression coil spring 86 to be positioned at the advanced position. At the same time, the actuator 88 is pivotally moved in the clockwise direction in a front view from the light shielding position to the light transmitting position.

[0099] As a result, output of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 to the CPU 82 is interrupted. That is, the detection unit 78 detects the exposed position of the shutter 62.

[0100] Then, the CPU 82 determines that the shutter 62 has been moved from the covered position to the exposed position due to interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89.

[0101] When having sequentially determined, within a

predetermined period of time, that the shutter 62 is positioned at the covered position and the shutter 62 is positioned at the exposed position, the CPU 82 determines that the developing cartridge 7 is unused.

[0102] That is, the CPU 82 determines that the developing cartridge 7 is an unused cartridge when the detection unit 78 detects a movement of the shutter 62 from the covered position to the exposed position within a predetermined time period.

[0103] Subsequently, as shown in Fig. 12A, the detection unit 78 is moved rightward to be positioned at the cartridge type detection position while the agitator gear 47 is rotated continuously.

[0104] Then, the right end portion of the probe 87 is brought into contact with the agitator gear 47 from a left side thereof.

[0105] Then, the probe 87 is pressed leftward against the urging force of the compression coil spring 86 to be positioned at the retracted position. At the same time, the actuator 88 is pivotally moved in the counterclockwise direction in a front view to be positioned at the light shielding position.

[0106] As a result, the photo-sensor 89 outputs the ON signal to the CPU 82.

[0107] Then, the CPU 82 determines that the probe 87 has been moved from the advanced position to the retracted position upon receipt of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89.

[0108] Then, as shown in Fig. 12B, further rotation of the agitator gear 47 causes the probe 87 to face the detected opening 55 of the agitator gear 47.

[0109] As a result, the probe 87 is pressed rightward by the urging force of the compression coil spring 86 to be positioned at the advanced position. At the same time, the actuator 88 is pivotally moved in the clockwise direction in a front view from the light shielding position to be positioned at the light transmitting position.

[0110] Thus, output of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 to the CPU 82 is interrupted. That is, the detection unit 78 detects the detected opening 55 of the agitator gear 47.

[0111] Then, the CPU 82 determines that the detected opening 55 of the agitator gear 47 has been detected due to interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 in a state where the detection unit 78 is at the cartridge type detection position.

[0112] Then, the CPU 82 determines the type of the developing cartridge 7 in accordance with the number of times of interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 per unit time.

[0113] For example, in a case where a single detected opening 55 is formed in the agitator gear 47 (Fig. 6), the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 is interrupted once during one rotation of the agitator 15. In this case, the CPU 82 determines that a predetermined printing times is 6,000 sheets printing.

[0114] In a case where two detected openings 55 are formed in the agitator gear 47 so as to be angularly

spaced away from each other by 180 degrees (see Fig. 14A), the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 is interrupted twice during one rotation of the agitator 15. In this case, the CPU 82 determines that a predetermined printing times is 3,000 sheets printing.

[0115] That is, the number of the detected openings 55 corresponds to information about the types of the developing cartridge 7. More specifically, the case where the agitator gear 47 is formed with a single detected opening 55 corresponds to information (first information) about the types of the developing cartridge 7 indicating that the predetermined printing times is 6,000 sheets printing, and the case where the agitator gear 47 is formed with two detected openings 55 corresponds to information (second information) about the types of the developing cartridge 7 indicating that the predetermined printing times is 3,000 sheets printing.

[0116] Thereafter, the CPU 82 counts actual printing times starting from assembly of the unused developing cartridge 7 into the main casing 2, and notifies and displays on an operation panel (not shown) an exchanging timing of the developing cartridge 7 when the counted printing times approaches a predetermined printing times in accordance with the types of the developing cartridge 7.

[0117] Incidentally, the CPU 82 determines that the developing cartridge 7 has been detached from the main casing 2 when the type of the developing cartridge 7 has not been detected within a predetermined period of time.

[0118] On the other hand, there is a case where after the unused developing cartridge 7 is assembled, the developing cartridge 7 is again assembled to the main casing 2 after the developing cartridge 7 is detached from the main casing 2, for example, for removing a jammed sheet P. In such a case, the shutter 62 is stopped at the exposed position.

[0119] At this time, the user looks at the gear cover 42 of the developing cartridge 7 to confirm that the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is exposed to the outside through the exposure opening 65. Thus, the user determines that the developing cartridge 7 is an old cartridge (a cartridge in use).

[0120] After the used developing cartridge 7 that has once been detached is assembled once again into the main casing 2, the probe 87 is not positioned at the retracted position but stays at the advanced position as shown in Fig. 11B when the detection unit 78 is positioned at the new cartridge detection position. Thus, the CPU 82 does not receive the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89.

[0121] Accordingly, the CPU 82 determines that the shutter 62 has stayed at the exposed position. Further, the CPU 82 determines that the re-assembled cartridge 7 is an old cartridge.

[0122] Then, the CPU 82 continues comparison between the predetermined printing times and the accumulated total number of printing times from the timing at which the CPU 82 determines that the assembled devel-

oping cartridge 7 is a new cartridge.

5. Operation for Detecting Remaining Amount of Toner in Developing Cartridge

[0123] An operation for detecting a remaining amount of toner in the developing cartridge 7 will be described.

[0124] Although not illustrated, after completion of the new cartridge detection operation and the cartridge type detection operation, the detection unit 78 is retracted from an optical path of the detection light emitted from the light emitting element 80.

[0125] Then, when the detected opening 55 and the detection window 38 are opposed to each other by rotation of the agitator gear 47 as shown in Fig. 13A, the detection light enters the toner chamber 14 passing through the detection window 38. That is, the detected opening 55 serves also as a light guiding portion that guides the detection light to the toner chamber 14.

[0126] When an amount of the toner in the toner chamber 14 is reduced to allow the detection light to pass through the toner chamber 14 and the detection window (not shown) of the right side wall 33R of the cartridge frame 31, and thus, the detection light is received by the light receiving element 81, the light receiving element 81 outputs an ON signal to the CPU 82.

[0127] By receiving the ON signal from the light receiving element 81, the CPU 82 determines that the amount of the toner in the toner chamber 14 is reduced.

[0128] Also in this case, the CPU 82 notifies and displays on an operation panel (not shown) that an exchanging timing of the developing cartridge 7 is approaching.

6. Operational Advantages

[0129]

(1) According to the developing cartridge 7 and the printer 1, the shutter 62 is irreversibly movable from the covered position (Fig. 10A) to the exposed position (Fig. 10B).

When the detection unit 78 detects the movement of the shutter 62 within a predetermined period of time, the CPU 82 determines that the developing cartridge 7 is unused.

Thus, in a state where the developing cartridge 7 is assembled into the main casing 2, the movement of the shutter 62 allows the detection unit 78 of the main casing 2 to detect the information as to whether the developing cartridge 7 is used or unused.

Further, in a state where the developing cartridge 7 is detached from the main casing 2, the user can easily visually confirm a position of the display portion 73 of the shutter 62.

Thus, the user can easily recognize whether the developing cartridge 7 is used or unused by confirming displacement of the display portion 73 of the shutter 62.

(2) Further, according to the developing cartridge 7 and the printer 1, the developing cartridge 7 can be determined to be unused when the display portion 73 of the shutter 62 is not exposed to the outside through the exposure opening 65.

(3) Further, according to the developing cartridge 7 and the printer 1, the agitator gear 47 can be covered by the shutter 62 before the driving force is inputted to the gear train 41, i.e., when the developing cartridge 7 is unused, as shown in Fig. 10A.

Thus, when the developing cartridge 7 is unused, the agitator gear 47 can be protected.

(4) Further, according to the developing cartridge 7 and the printer 1, by positioning the detection unit 78 at the cartridge type detection position after the shutter 62 has been positioned at the exposed position as shown in Fig. 12, the types of the developing cartridge 7 can be detected.

Thus, during the use of the developing cartridge 7, the detection unit 78 can detect the types of the developing cartridge 7 at an arbitrary timing.

(5) Further, according to the developing cartridge 7 and the printer 1, the detected opening 55 serves also as a light guiding portion for guiding the detection light emitted from the light emitting element 80 of the empty sensor unit 79 to the toner chamber 14 as shown in Fig. 13A.

[0130] Thus, the empty sensor unit 79 can detect the remaining amount of toner in the toner chamber 14.

7. Modifications

[0131]

(1) In the above-described embodiment, the remaining amount of toner in the toner chamber 14 is detected by means of the empty sensor unit 79. Alternatively, however, as shown in Fig. 13B, a position of the agitation blades 17 of the agitator 15 can be determined by means of the empty sensor unit 79. In this case, it is assumed that a toner level is below the detection window 38 and the detection light emitted from the light emitting element 80 is always received by the light receiving element 81.

When the agitation blades 17 extending from the agitator shaft 16 confront the detection window 38 during rotation of the agitator 15, the detection light is blocked by the agitation blades 17. As a result, output of the ON signal from the light receiving element 81 to the CPU 82 is interrupted.

Then, the CPU 82 determines that the agitation blades 17 are in confrontation with the detection window 38 due to interruption of the ON signal from the light receiving element 81.

According to the modification, the position of the agitation blades 17 of the agitator 15 can be detected by means of the empty sensor unit 79.

Thus, rotation of the agitator 15 can be controlled so as to stop the agitation blades 17 at a desired position.

According to this modification, operations and effects similar to those of the above-described embodiment can also be obtained.

(2) Further, in the above-described embodiment, the empty sensor unit 79 includes the light emitting element 80 and the light receiving element 81. The light emitting element 80 is positioned at a left side of the developing cartridge 7, and the light receiving element 81 is positioned at a right side of the developing cartridge 7. The detection light from the light emitting element 80 is received by the light receiving element 81.

Alternatively, however, a configuration may be possible in which both the light emitting element 80 and the light receiving element 81 are positioned at a left side of the developing cartridge 7 and a reflection plate is positioned at a right side of the developing cartridge 7 to allow the detection light from the light emitting element 80 to be reflected by the reflection plate and received by the light receiving element 81.

(3) In the above-described embodiment, the shutter 62 is positioned at the covered position in a state where the developing cartridge 7 is unused, and the shutter 62 is moved from the covered position to the exposed position in the new cartridge detection operation. Alternatively, however, a configuration may be possible in which the shutter 62 is positioned at the exposed position in a state where the developing cartridge 7 is unused and the shutter 62 is moved from the exposed position to the covered position in the new cartridge detection operation.

Then, after the shutter 62 is positioned at the covered position, the toothed portion 74 of the shutter 62 is moved rearward of the agitator gear 47 so as to be spaced away from the agitator gear 47, and the untoothed portion 75 of the shutter 62 is opposed to the agitator gear 47 from below.

As a result, meshing engagement between the toothed portion 74 of the shutter 62 and the agitator gear 47 is released.

Note that, in this modification, the cartridge type detecting operation and the toner amount detecting operation may be performed by methods different from those described in the above embodiment and known to those skilled in the art.

According to this modification, the agitator gear 47 can be covered after input of the driving force to the gear train 41, i.e., while the developing cartridge 7 is being used.

Thus, the agitator 47 can be protected while the developing cartridge 7 is being used.

Further, the shutter 62 includes the toothed portion 74 to which the driving force is transmitted and the untoothed portion 75 to which the driving force is not transmitted. Accordingly, the shutter 62 can be

stopped reliably after being moved with a predetermined moving amount.

Thus, the shutter 62 can reliably be irreversibly moved with a simple configuration.

According to this modification, operations and effects similar to those of the above-described embodiment can also be obtained.

(4) Further, in the above-described embodiment, the number of the detected openings 55 formed in the agitator gear 47 corresponds to information about the type of the developing cartridge 7. Further, the CPU 82 determines the type of the developing cartridge 7 in accordance with the number of times of interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 per unit time.

Alternatively, however, a length of the detected opening 55 in a circumferential direction of the agitator gear 47 may be made to correspond to the information about the type of the developing cartridge 7.

For example, in a case where the length of the detected opening 55 in the circumferential direction of the agitator 47 is long, this length of the detected opening 55 corresponds to the information (first information) about the type of the developing cartridge 7 indicating that a predetermined printing times is 6,000 sheets printing. Further, in a case where the length of the detected opening 55 in the circumferential direction of the agitator 47 is short, this length of the detected opening 55 corresponds to the information (second information) about the type of the developing cartridge 7 indicating that a predetermined printing times 3,000 sheets printing.

Thus, the CPU 82 determines the types of the developing cartridge 7 in accordance with duration of interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89.

More specifically, in a case where the duration of interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 is long, the CPU 82 determines that the predetermined printing times is 6,000 sheets printing. Further, in a case where the duration of interruption of the ON signal from the photo-sensor 89 is short, the CPU 82 determines that the predetermined printing times is 3,000 sheets printing.

According to this modification, operations and effects similar to those of the above-described embodiment can also be obtained.

(5) Further, in the above-described embodiment, the detected opening 55 as a detected portion is formed in the agitator gear 47. However, a shape of the detected portion is not specifically limited. For example, as shown in Fig. 14B, two detected projections 100 may be provided in the agitator gear 47 as an example of two detected portions.

Each of the detected projections 100 is formed as a projection protruding leftward from a left surface of the agitator gear 47. The detected projection 100 is

defined by a first sloped surface 98 and a second sloped surface 99. The first sloped surface 98 is positioned downstream of the second sloped surface 99 in the clockwise direction in a left side view. The first sloped surface 98 is inclined diagonally rightward from an upstream end to a downstream end of the first sloped surface 98 in the clockwise direction in a left side view. The second sloped surface 99 is inclined diagonally leftward from an upstream end to a downstream end of the second sloped surface 99 in the clockwise direction in a left side view.

Note that, in this modification, the toner amount detecting operation may be performed by a method different from that described in the above embodiment and known to those skilled in the art.

According to this modification, the detection unit 78 is allowed to detect the types of the developing cartridge 7 with a simple configuration.

According to this modification, operations and effects similar to those of the above-described embodiment can also be obtained.

(6) Further, in the above-described embodiment, the detection unit 78 is movable to the new cartridge detection position and to the cartridge type detection position. Alternatively, however, appropriate arrangement of the slide member 84, the probe 87, the actuator 88, and the photo-sensor 89 allows detection of whether the developing cartridge 7 is used or unused and detection of the type of the developing cartridge 7 without moving the detection unit 78.

[0132] While the present invention has been described in detail with reference to the embodiments thereof, it would be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications may be made therein within the scope defined by the appended claims.

Claims

1. A cartridge (7) for being detachable from and attachable to a main casing (2) of an image forming apparatus (1), the cartridge (7) comprising:

a frame (31) configured to accommodate therein developing agent;

a rotation body (15) having a rotation axis (A) extending in a predetermined direction, the rotation body (15) being provided at the frame (31) and rotatable about the rotation axis relative to the frame (31);

a driving force transmission unit (41) provided at the frame (31) and being suitable for transmitting an external driving force from the image forming apparatus to the rotation body (15);

a gear cover main portion (61) and

a moving member (62) suitable for being irreversibly moved to one of a covered position and

an exposed position by the external driving force transmitted through the driving force transmission unit (41), the moving member (62) comprising a cover portion (72) which is configured to cover at least a portion of the driving force transmission unit (41) when the moving member (62) is at the covered position, and which is configured to expose the driving force transmission unit (41) to the outside of the cartridge when the moving member (62) is at the exposed position, **characterized in that** the gear cover main portion (61) includes a detection opening (64) and an exposure opening (65),

the cover portion (72) is interposed between the detection opening (64) and the driving force transmission unit (41) to cover the portion of the driving force transmission unit (41) in the covered position of the moving member (62), and is not interposed between the detection opening (64) and the driving force transmission unit (41) to expose the driving force transmission unit (41) through the detection opening (64) in the exposed position of the moving member (62), the moving member (62) further comprises a display portion (73) which is exposed to the outside of the cartridge through the exposure opening (65) in the exposed position and which is retracted from the exposure opening (65) in the covered position.

2. The cartridge as claimed in claim 1, wherein one of the covered position and the exposed position indicates that the cartridge (7) is a new cartridge.
3. The cartridge as claimed in claim 1, wherein the moving member (62) is irreversibly moved from the covered position to the exposed position.
4. The cartridge as claimed in claim 1, wherein the moving member (62) is irreversibly moved from the exposed position to the covered position.
5. The cartridge as claimed in claim 1, wherein the driving force transmission unit (41) includes a detected portion (55, 100) suitable for being detected by an external detection unit (79, 78) of the image forming apparatus (1); wherein the detected portion (55, 100) has information relating to types of the cartridge (7); and wherein the moving member (62) covers the detected portion (55, 100) when the moving member (62) is at the covered position.
6. The cartridge as claimed in claim 5, wherein the detected portion (100) is a projection suitable for being detected by the external detection unit (79, 78), the projection being indicative of one of the types of the cartridge (7).

7. The cartridge as claimed in claim 5, wherein the detected portion (55) includes a light guiding portion suitable for guiding a detection light emitted from the external detection unit (79, 78) into the frame (31).
8. The cartridge as claimed in claim 7, wherein the rotation body (15) is an agitation member configured to agitate developing agent.
9. The cartridge as claimed in claim 1, wherein the moving member (62) includes a partially untoothed gear (71) comprising a toothed portion (74) suitable for receiving the external driving force, and an untoothed portion (75) suitable for prohibiting transmission of the external driving force.
10. An image forming apparatus (1) comprising:
- a main casing (2); and
- a cartridge (7) as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, the cartridge being detachable from and attachable to the main casing (2), the external driving force being transmitted from the main casing (2),
- the main casing (2) comprising:
- a detection unit (78, 79) configured to detect a movement of the moving member (62); and
- a judgment unit (82) configured to judge a condition of the cartridge (7) based on a detection of the detection unit (78, 79).
11. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein the driving force transmission unit (41) includes a detected portion (55, 100) configured to be detected by the detection unit (78, 79); wherein the detected portion (55, 100) has information relating to types of the cartridge (7); and wherein the moving member (62) covers the detected portion (55, 100) at the covered position.
12. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein the detected portion (100) is a projection detected by the detection unit (78, 79), the projection being indicative of one of the types of the cartridge (7).
13. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein the detection unit (78, 79) configured to emit a detection light; and wherein the detected portion (55) includes a light guiding portion configured to guide the detection light into the frame (31).
14. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein the rotation body (15) is an agitation member configured to agitate developing agent.

15. The image forming apparatus as claimed in anyone of claims 10 to 14, wherein the judgment unit (82) makes a judgment that the cartridge (7) attached to the main casing (2) is a new cartridge if the detection unit (78, 79) detects the movement of the moving member (62) within a predetermined period of time.

Patentansprüche

1. Kartusche (7), die von bzw. an einem Hauptgehäuse (2) einer Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung (1) abnehmbar und anbringbar ist, wobei die Kartusche (7) aufweist:
- einen Rahmen (31), der so gestaltet ist, dass er einen Entwickler aufnehmen kann;
- einen Drehkörper (15) mit einer Drehachse (A), die sich in einer vorgegebenen Richtung erstreckt, wobei der Drehkörper (15) am Rahmen (31) vorgesehen ist und in Bezug auf den Rahmen (31) um die Drehachse drehbar ist;
- eine Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41), die an dem Rahmen (31) vorgesehen ist und die dafür ausgelegt ist, eine externe Antriebskraft von der Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung auf den Drehkörper (15) zu übertragen;
- einen Getriebeabdeckungshauptabschnitt (61) und
- ein bewegliches Element (62), das dafür ausgelegt ist, durch die externe Antriebskraft, die durch die Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) übertragen wird, nichtumkehrbar in eine abgedeckte Position oder eine freiliegende Position bewegt zu werden, wobei das bewegliche Element (62) einen Abdeckungsabschnitt (72) aufweist, der so gestaltet ist, dass er zumindest einen Abschnitt der Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) abdeckt, wenn das bewegliche Element (62) die abgedeckte Position einnimmt, und der so gestaltet ist, dass er die Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) zur Außenseite der Kartusche hin freilegt, wenn das bewegliche Element (62) die freiliegende Position einnimmt, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Getriebeabdeckungshauptabschnitt (61) eine Erfassungsöffnung (64) und eine Freilegeöffnung (65) aufweist,
- der Abdeckungsabschnitt (72) zwischen der Erfassungsöffnung (64) und der Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) angeordnet ist, um den Abschnitt der Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) abzudecken, wenn das bewegliche Element (62) die abgedeckte Position einnimmt, und nicht zwischen der Erfassungsöffnung (64) und der Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) angeordnet ist, so dass er die Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) durch die Erfassungsöffnung (64) freilegt, wenn das bewegliche Ele-

- ment (62) die freiliegende Position einnimmt, das bewegliche Element (62) ferner einen Anzeigeabschnitt (73) aufweist, der in der freiliegenden Position durch die Freilegeöffnung zur Außenseite der Kartusche hin freigelegt ist, und der in der abgedeckten Position von der Freilegeöffnung (65) zurückgezogen ist. 5
2. Kartusche nach Anspruch 1, wobei entweder die abgedeckte Position oder die freiliegende Position angibt, dass die Kartusche (7) eine neue Kartusche ist. 10
3. Kartusche nach Anspruch 1, wobei das bewegliche Element (62) nichtumkehrbar aus der abgedeckten Position in die freiliegende Position bewegt wird. 15
4. Kartusche nach Anspruch 1, wobei das bewegliche Element (62) nichtumkehrbar aus der freiliegenden Position in die abgedeckte Position bewegt wird. 20
5. Kartusche nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) einen zu erfassenden Abschnitt (55, 100) aufweist, der dafür ausgelegt ist, von einer externen Erfassungseinheit (79, 78) der Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung (1) erfasst zu werden; wobei der zu erfassende Abschnitt (55, 100) Informationen in Bezug auf die Typen der Kartusche (7) aufweist; und 25
wobei das bewegliche Element (62) den zu erfassenden Abschnitt (55, 100) abdeckt, wenn das bewegliche Element (62) die abgedeckte Position einnimmt. 30
6. Kartusche nach Anspruch 5, wobei der zu erfassende Abschnitt (100) ein Vorsprung ist, der dafür ausgelegt ist, von der externen Erfassungseinheit (79, 78) erfasst zu werden, wobei der Vorsprung auf einen der Typen der Kartusche (7) hinweist. 35
7. Kartusche nach Anspruch 5, wobei der zu erfassende Abschnitt (55) einen lichtleitenden Abschnitt aufweist, der dafür ausgelegt ist, ein Erfassungslicht, das von der externen Erfassungseinheit (79, 78) ausgesendet wird, in den Rahmen (31) zu leiten. 40
8. Kartusche nach Anspruch 7, wobei der Drehkörper (15) ein Rührorgan ist, das so gestaltet ist, dass es Entwickler aufrührt. 45
9. Kartusche nach Anspruch 1, wobei das bewegliche Element (62) ein teilweise ungezahntes Getriebe (71) aufweist, das einen gezahnten Abschnitt (74), der dafür ausgelegt ist, die externe Antriebskraft aufzunehmen, und einen ungezahnten Abschnitt (75) aufweist, der dafür ausgelegt ist, eine Übertragung der externen Antriebskraft nicht zuzulassen. 50
10. Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung (1), aufweisend:
- ein Hauptgehäuse (2); und
eine Kartusche (7) nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, wobei die Kartusche vom bzw. am Hauptgehäuse (2) abnehmbar und anbringbar ist, wobei die externe Antriebskraft vom Hauptgehäuse (2) übertragen wird, wobei das Hauptgehäuse (2) aufweist:
eine Erfassungseinheit (78, 79), die so gestaltet ist, dass sie eine Bewegung des beweglichen Elements (62) erfasst; und
eine Beurteilungseinheit (82), die so gestaltet ist, dass sie einen Zustand der Kartusche (7) auf Basis einer Erfassung der Erfassungseinheit (78, 79) beurteilt.
11. Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 10, wobei die Antriebskraftübertragungseinheit (41) einen zu erfassenden Abschnitt (55, 100) aufweist, der so gestaltet ist, dass er von der Erfassungseinheit (78, 79) erfasst wird;
wobei der zu erfassende Abschnitt (55, 100) Informationen in Bezug auf Typen der Kartusche (7) aufweist; und
wobei das bewegliche Element (62) den zu erfassenden Abschnitt (55, 100) in der abgedeckten Position verdeckt. 25
12. Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 11, wobei der zu erfassende Abschnitt (100) ein Vorsprung ist, der von der Erfassungseinheit (78, 79) erfasst wird, wobei der Vorsprung auf einen der Typen der Kartusche (7) hinweist. 30
13. Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 11, wobei die Erfassungseinheit (78, 79) so gestaltet ist, dass sie ein Erfassungslicht aussendet; und
wobei der zu erfassende Abschnitt (55) einen lichtleitenden Abschnitt aufweist, der so gestaltet ist, dass er das Erfassungslicht in den Rahmen (31) leitet. 35
14. Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 13, wobei der Drehkörper (15) ein Rührerelement ist, das so gestaltet ist, dass es Entwickler aufrührt. 40
15. Bilderzeugungsvorrichtung nach einem der Ansprüche 10 bis 14,
wobei die Beurteilungseinheit (82) urteilt, dass die am Hauptgehäuse (2) angebrachte Kartusche (7) eine neue Kartusche ist, wenn die Erfassungseinheit (78, 79) die Bewegung des beweglichen Elements (62) innerhalb einer vorgegebenen Zeit erfasst. 45

Revendications

1. Cartouche (7) destinée à pouvoir être séparée d'un

boîtier principal (2) d'un dispositif de formation d'image (1) et couplée à celui-ci, la cartouche (7) comprenant :

un bâti (31) configuré de manière à recevoir à l'intérieur un agent de développement ;
 un corps rotatif (15) présentant un axe de rotation (A) s'étendant dans une direction prédéterminée, le corps rotatif (15) étant agencé au niveau du bâti (31) et pouvant tourner autour de l'axe de rotation par rapport au bâti (31) ;
 une unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) agencée au niveau du bâti (31) et adaptée de manière à transmettre un couple d'entraînement externe depuis le dispositif de formation d'image vers le corps rotatif (15) ;
 une partie principale de couvercle d'engrenage (61) et
 un élément mobile (62) apte à être déplacé de manière irréversible vers l'une d'une position couverte et d'une position exposée par le couple d'entraînement externe transmis par l'intermédiaire de l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41), l'élément mobile (62) comprenant une partie de couvercle (72) qui est configurée de manière à recouvrir au moins une partie de l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) lorsque l'élément mobile (62) est à la position couverte, et qui est configurée de manière à exposer l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) à l'extérieur de la cartouche lorsque l'élément mobile (62) est à la position exposée,
caractérisée en ce que la partie principale de couvercle d'engrenage (61) comporte une ouverture de détection (64) et une ouverture d'exposition (65),
 la partie de couvercle (72) est interposée entre l'ouverture de détection (64) et l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) afin de recouvrir la partie de l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) dans la position couverte de l'élément mobile (62), et n'est pas interposée entre l'ouverture de détection (64) et l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) afin d'exposer l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) à travers l'ouverture de détection (64) dans la position exposée de l'élément mobile (62),
 l'élément mobile (62) comprend en outre une partie d'affichage (73) qui est exposée à l'extérieur de la cartouche à travers l'ouverture d'exposition (65) dans la position exposée et qui est rétractée par rapport à l'ouverture d'exposition (65) dans la position couverte.

2. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle l'une de la position couverte et de la position exposée

indique le fait que la cartouche (7) est une nouvelle cartouche.

3. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle l'élément mobile (62) est déplacé de manière irréversible depuis la position couverte vers la position exposée.
4. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle l'élément mobile (62) est déplacé de manière irréversible depuis la position exposée vers la position couverte.
5. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) comporte une partie détectée (55, 100) adaptée de manière à être détectée par une unité de détection externe (79, 78) du dispositif de formation d'image (1) ;
 dans laquelle la partie détectée (55, 100) comporte des informations se rapportant aux types de la cartouche (7) ; et
 dans laquelle l'élément mobile (62) recouvre la partie détectée (55, 100) lorsque l'élément mobile (62) est à la position couverte.
6. Cartouche selon la revendication 5, dans laquelle la partie détectée (100) est une saillie appropriée de manière à être détectée par l'unité de détection externe (79, 78), la saillie étant représentative de l'un des types de la cartouche (7).
7. Cartouche selon la revendication 5, dans laquelle la partie détectée (55) comporte une partie de guidage de lumière appropriée afin de guider une lumière de détection émise depuis l'unité de détection externe (79, 78) dans le bâti (31).
8. Cartouche selon la revendication 7, dans laquelle le corps rotatif (15) est un élément d'agitation configuré de manière à agiter l'agent de développement.
9. Cartouche selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle l'élément mobile (62) comporte un engrenage partiellement non denté (71) comprenant une partie dentée (74) appropriée de manière à recevoir le couple d'entraînement externe, et une partie non dentée (75) appropriée de manière à interdire la transmission du couple d'entraînement externe.
10. Dispositif de formation d'image (1) comprenant :

un boîtier principal (2) ; et
 une cartouche (7) selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, la cartouche pouvant être séparée du boîtier principal (2) et couplée à ce dernier, le couple d'entraînement externe étant transmis par le boîtier principal (2),

le boîtier principal (2) comprenant :

une unité de détection (78, 79) configurée de manière à détecter un déplacement de l'élément mobile (62) ; et 5
une unité de détermination (82) configurée de manière à déterminer un état de la cartouche (7) sur la base d'une détection de l'unité de détection (78, 79). 10

11. Dispositif de formation d'image selon la revendication 10, dans lequel l'unité de transmission de couple d'entraînement (41) comporte une partie détectée (55, 100) configurée de manière à être détectée par l'unité de détection (78, 79) ; 15
dans lequel la partie détectée (55, 100) comporte des informations se rapportant aux types de la cartouche (7) ; et
dans lequel l'élément mobile (62) recouvre la partie détectée (55, 100) à la position couverte. 20
12. Dispositif de formation d'image selon la revendication 11, dans lequel la partie de détection (100) est une saillie détectée par l'unité de détection (78, 79), la saillie étant représentative de l'un des types de la cartouche (7). 25
13. Dispositif de formation d'image selon la revendication 11, dans lequel l'unité de détection (78, 79) est configurée de manière à émettre une lumière de détection ; et 30
dans lequel la partie détectée (55) comporte une partie de guidage de lumière configurée de manière à guider la lumière de détection dans le bâti (31). 35
14. Dispositif de formation d'image selon la revendication 13, dans lequel le corps rotatif (15) est un élément d'agitation configuré de manière à agiter l'agent de développement. 40
15. Dispositif de formation d'image selon l'une quelconque des revendications 10 à 14, dans lequel l'unité de détermination (82) détermine le fait que la cartouche (7) fixée sur le boîtier principal (2) est une nouvelle cartouche si l'unité de détection (78, 79) 45
détecte le déplacement de l'élément mobile (62) au cours d'une période de temps prédéterminée. 50

50

55

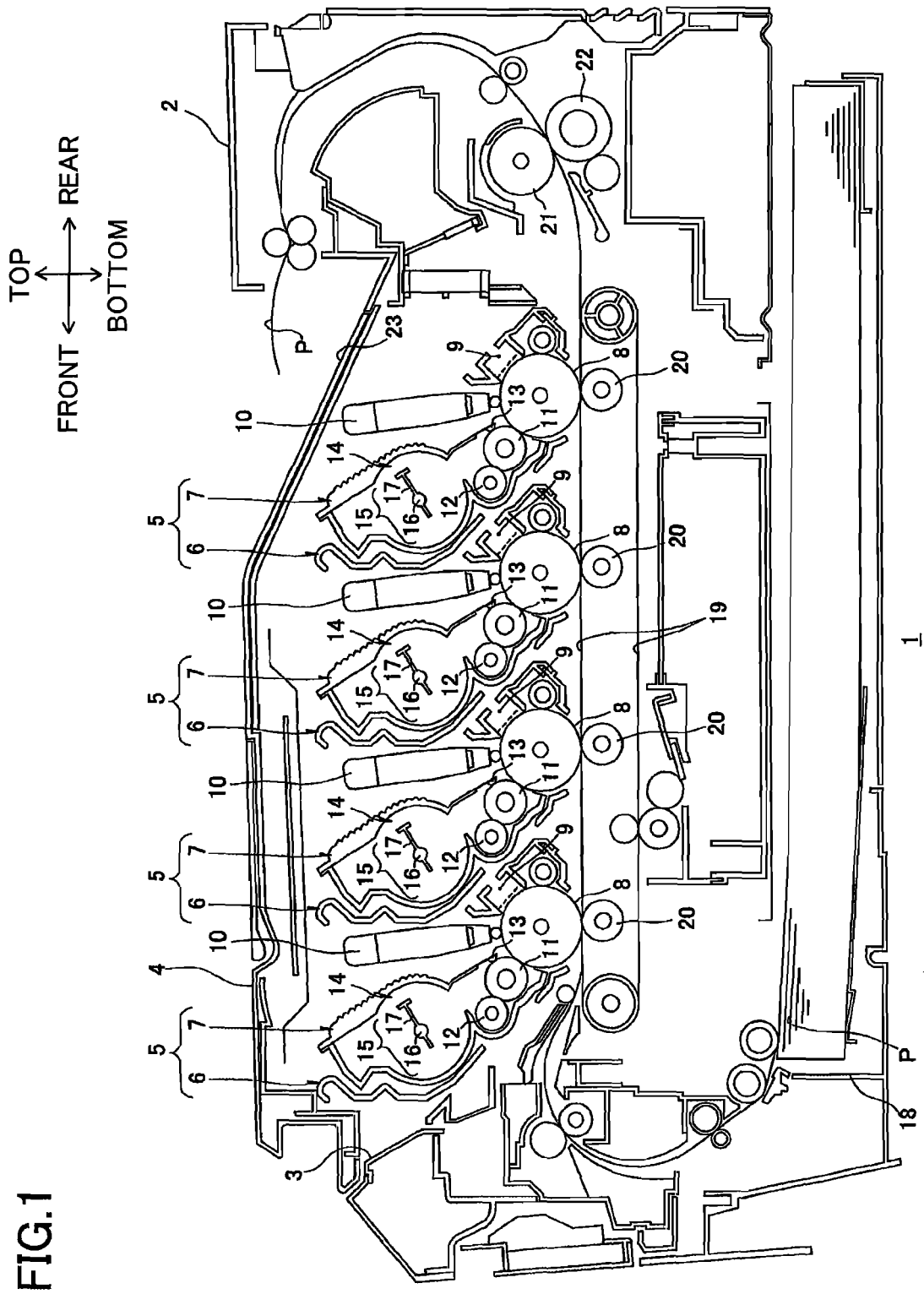


FIG.2

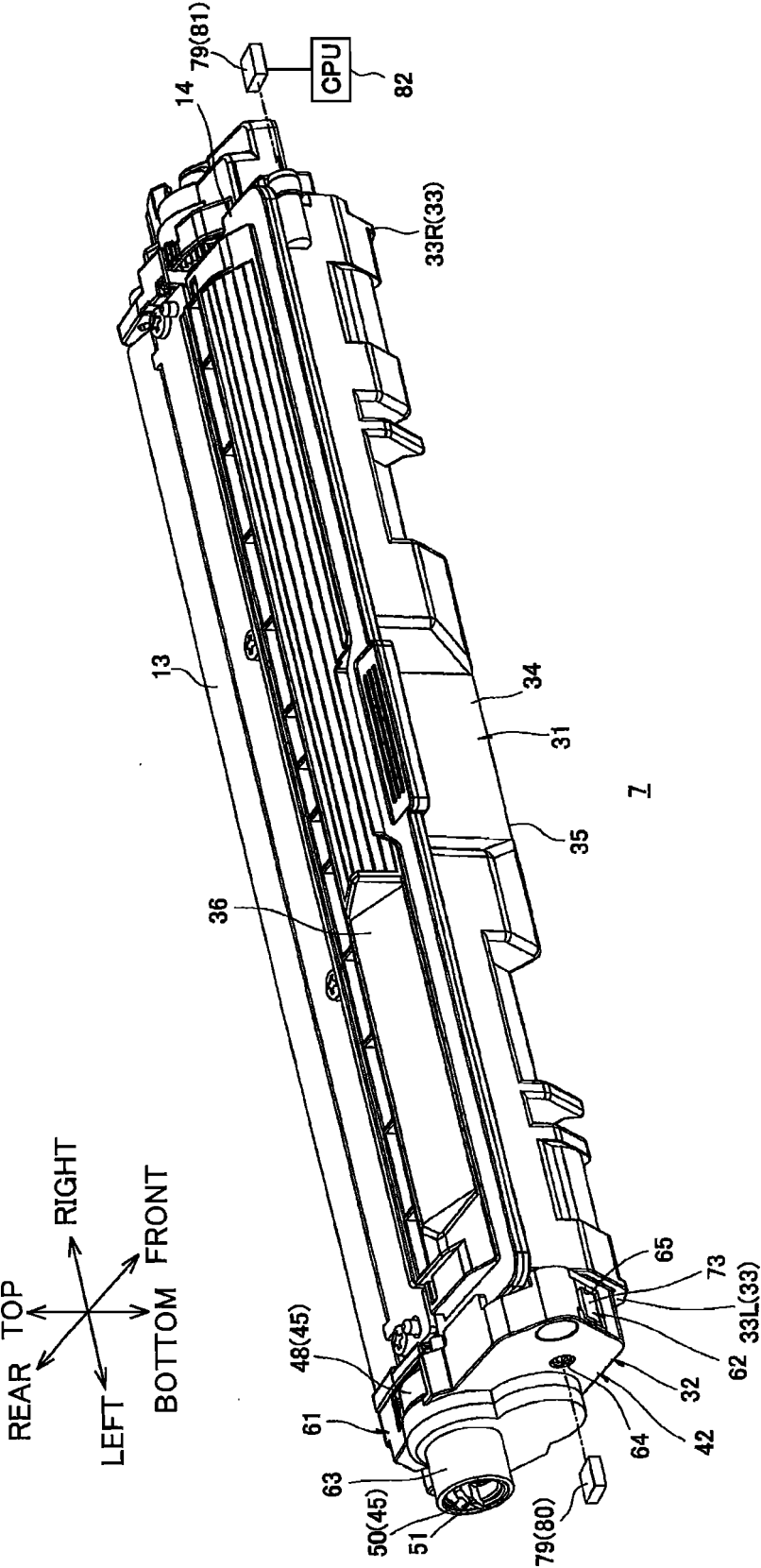


FIG.3

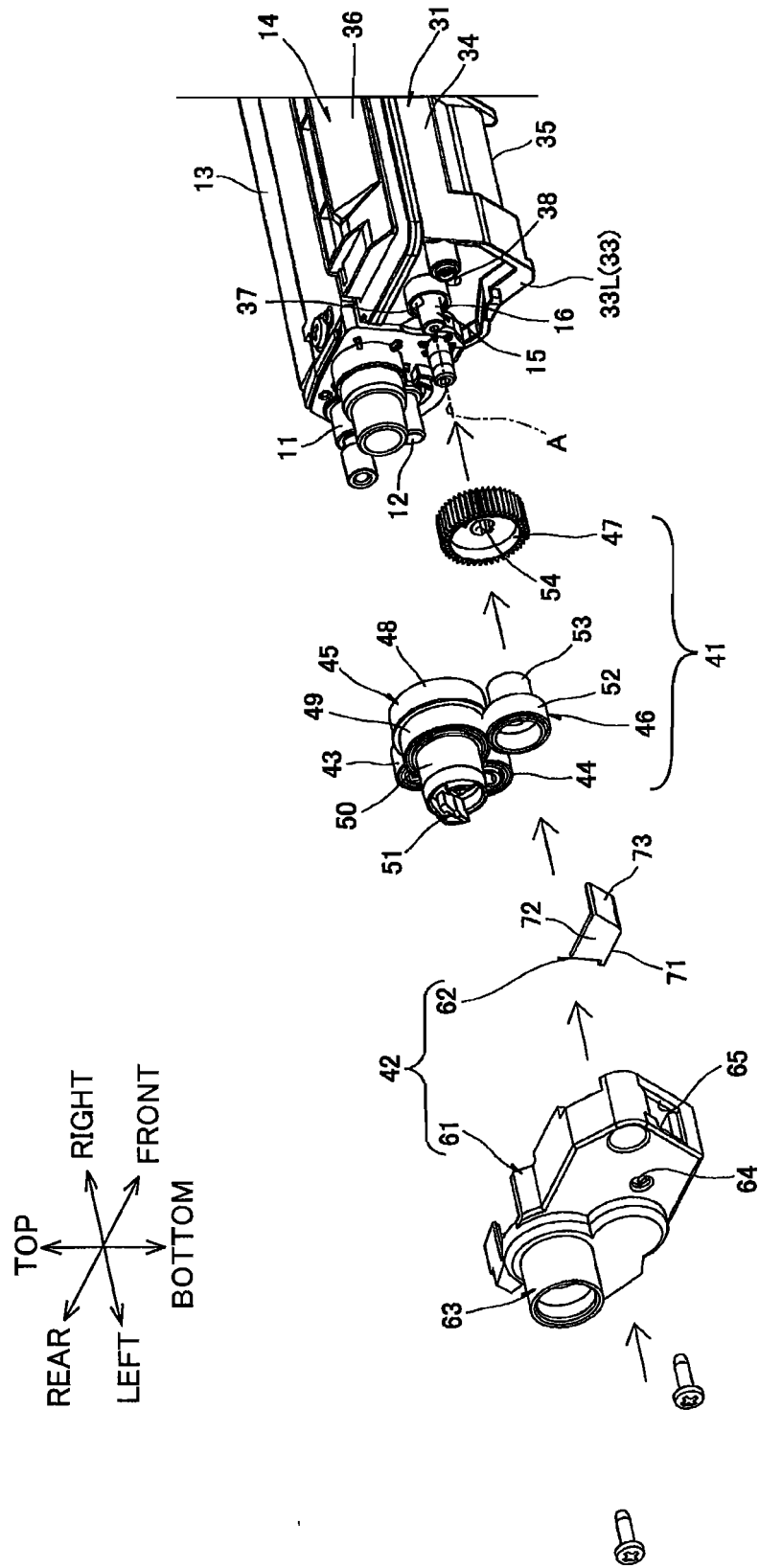


FIG.4

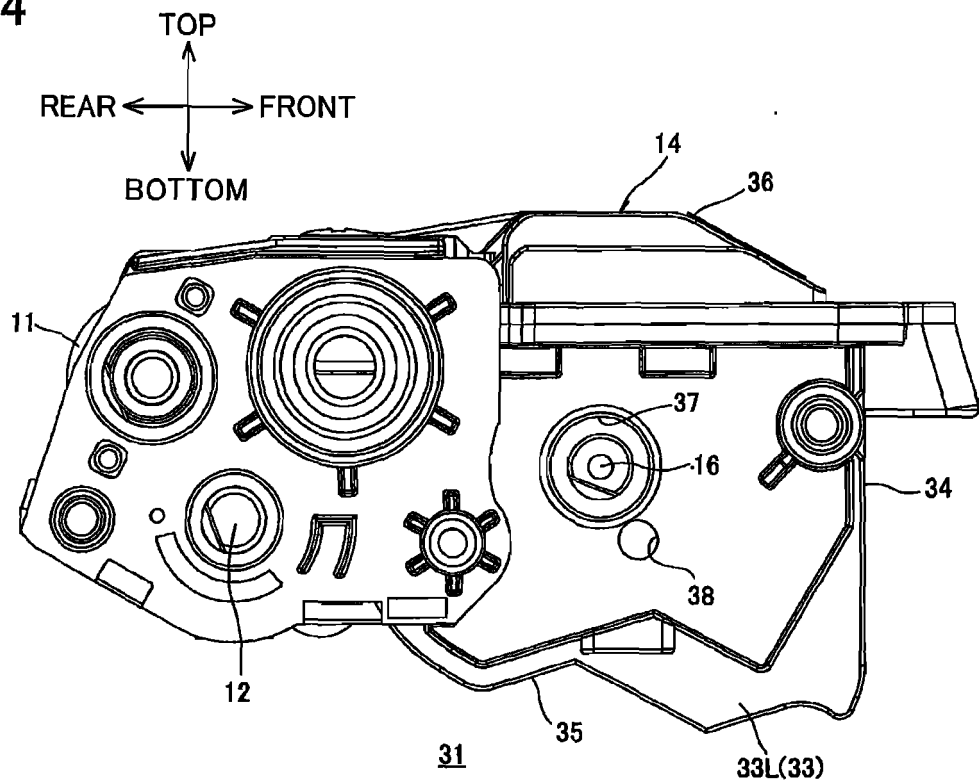


FIG.5

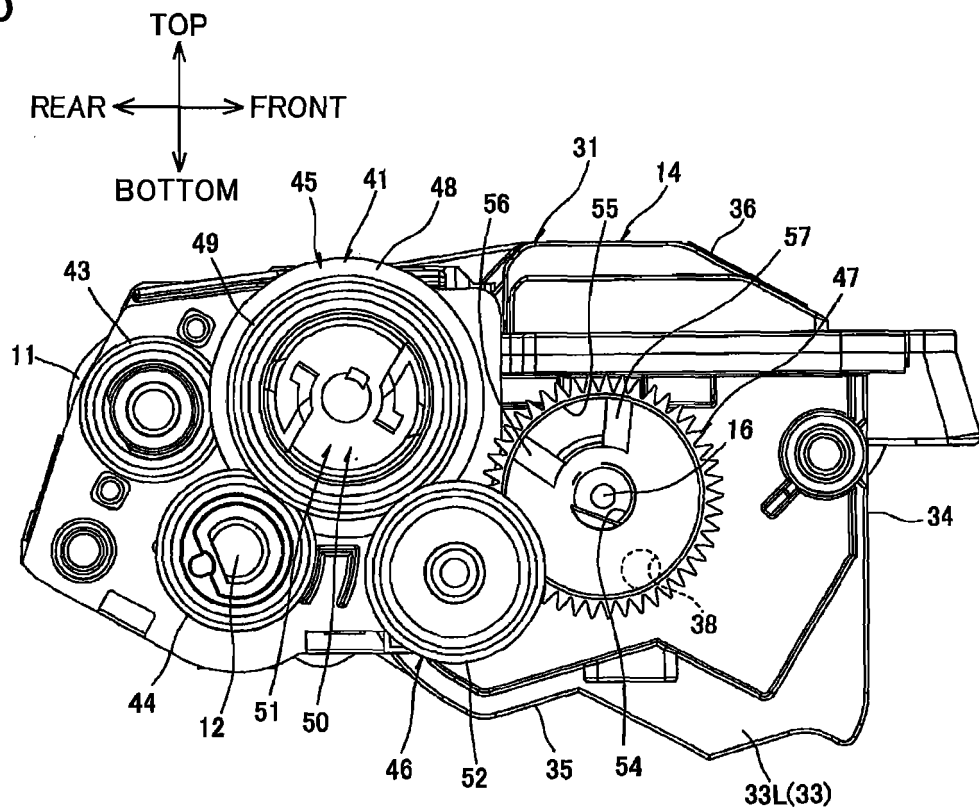


FIG.6

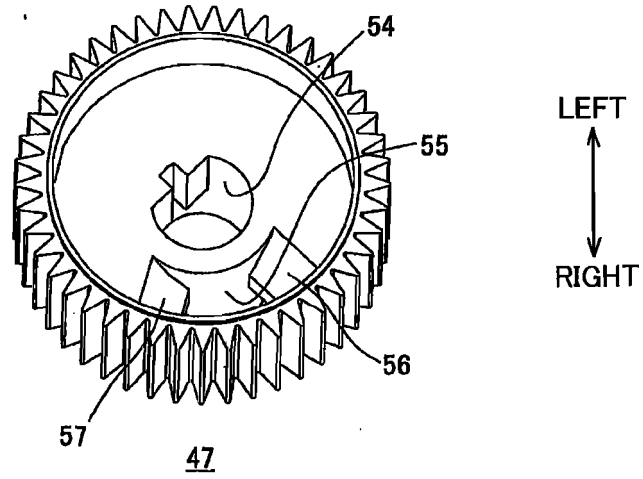


FIG.7

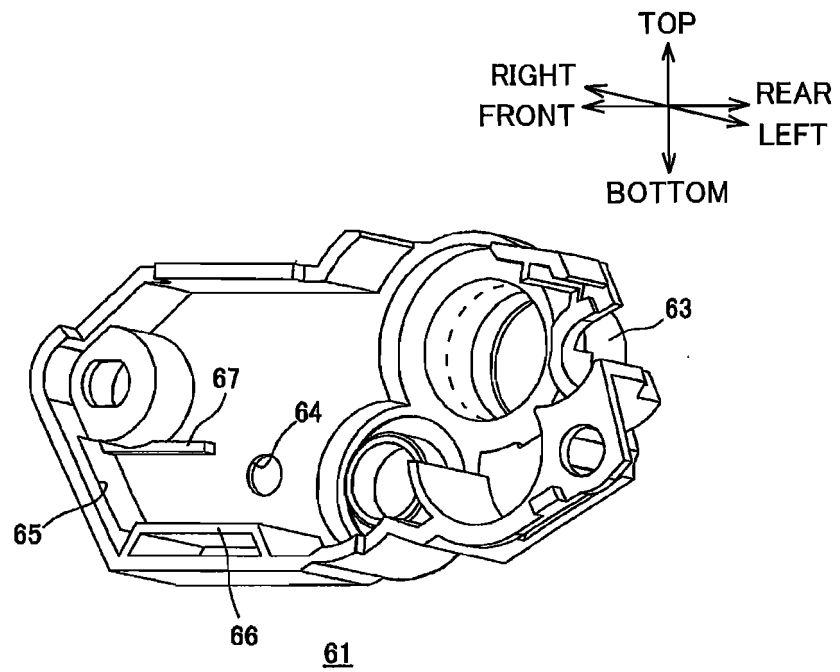


FIG.8

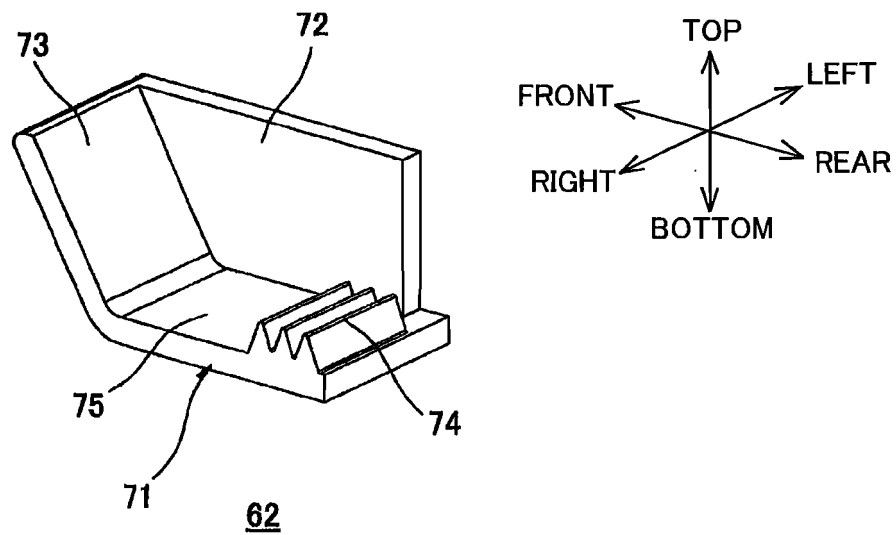


FIG.9

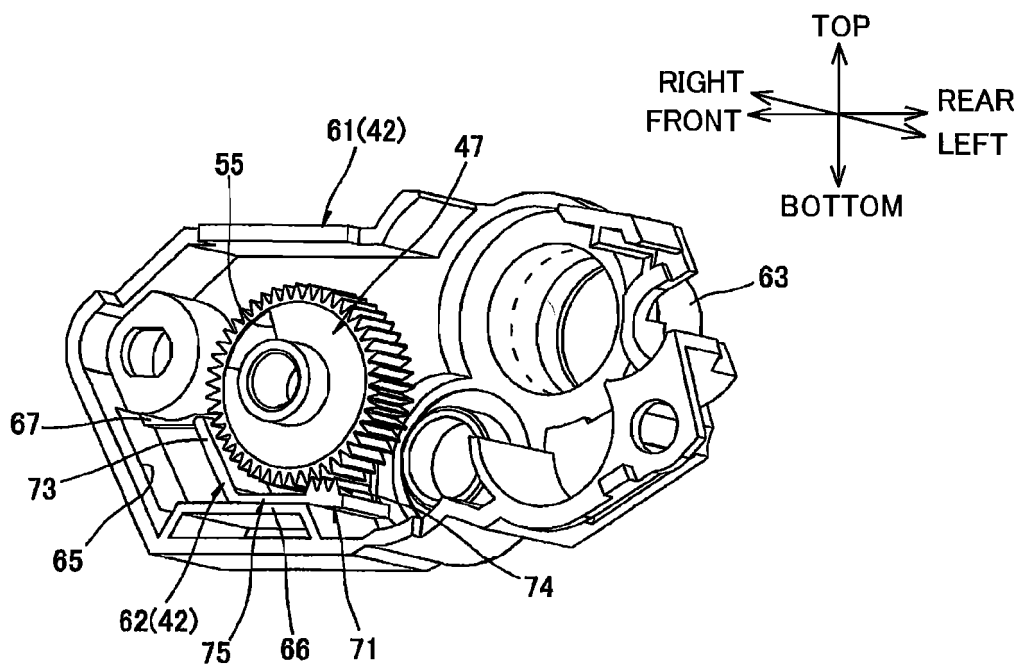


FIG.10A

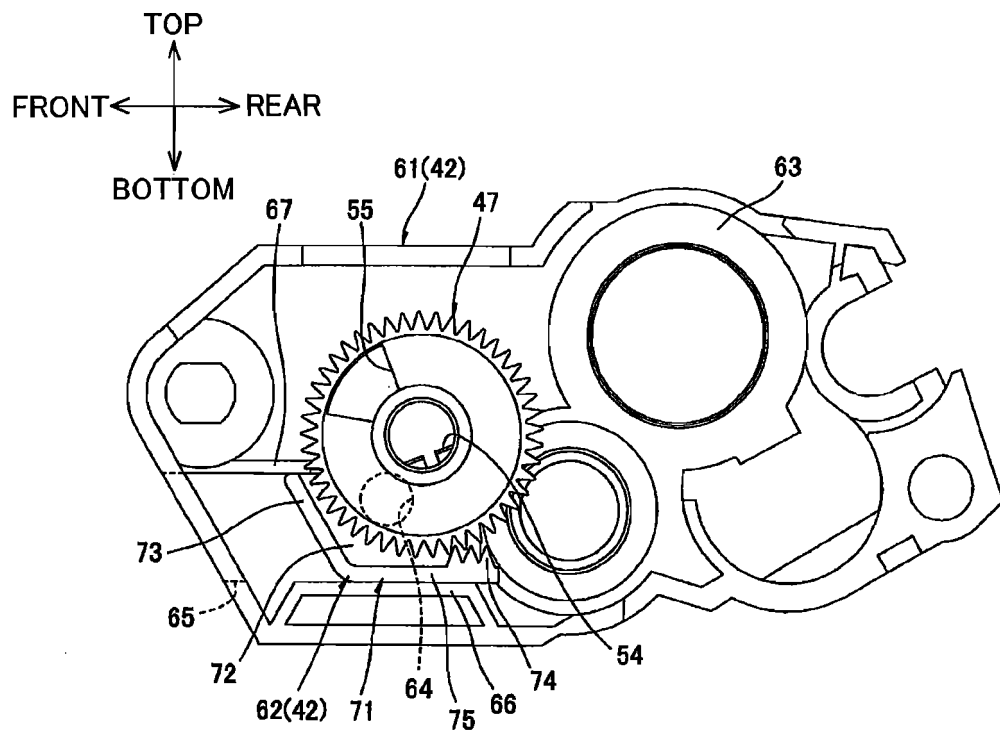


FIG.10B

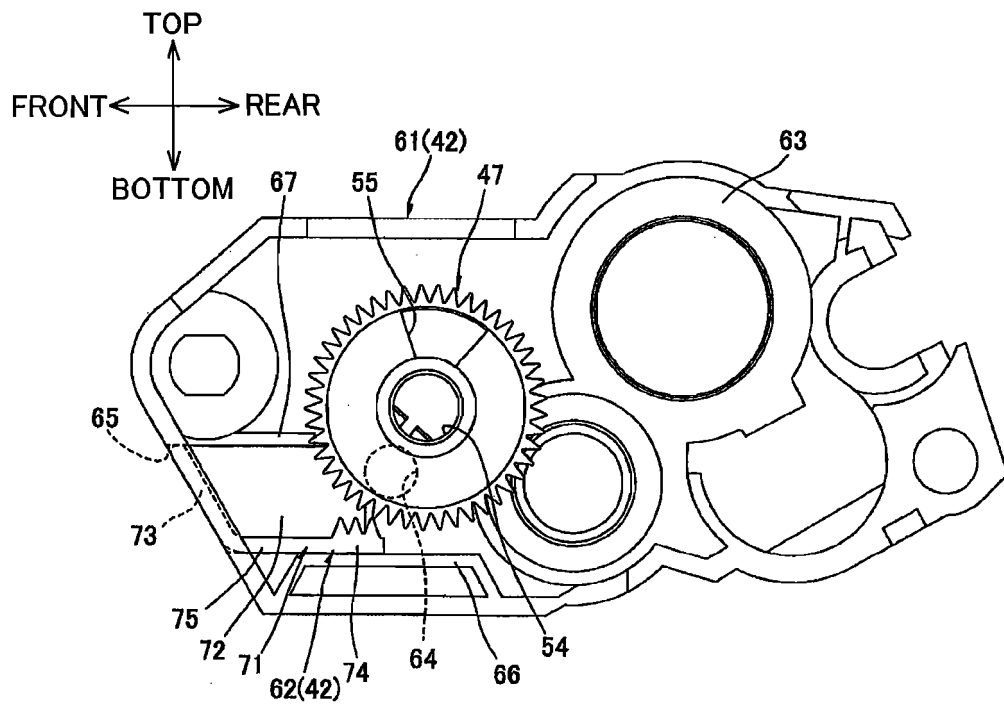


FIG.11A

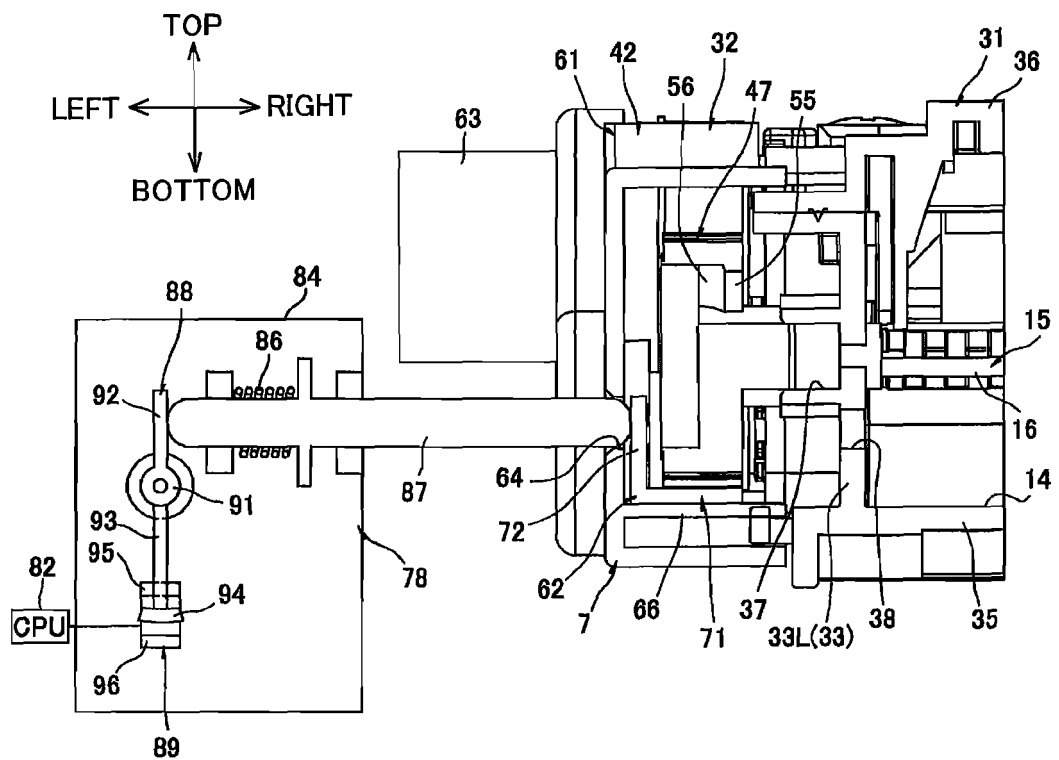


FIG.11B

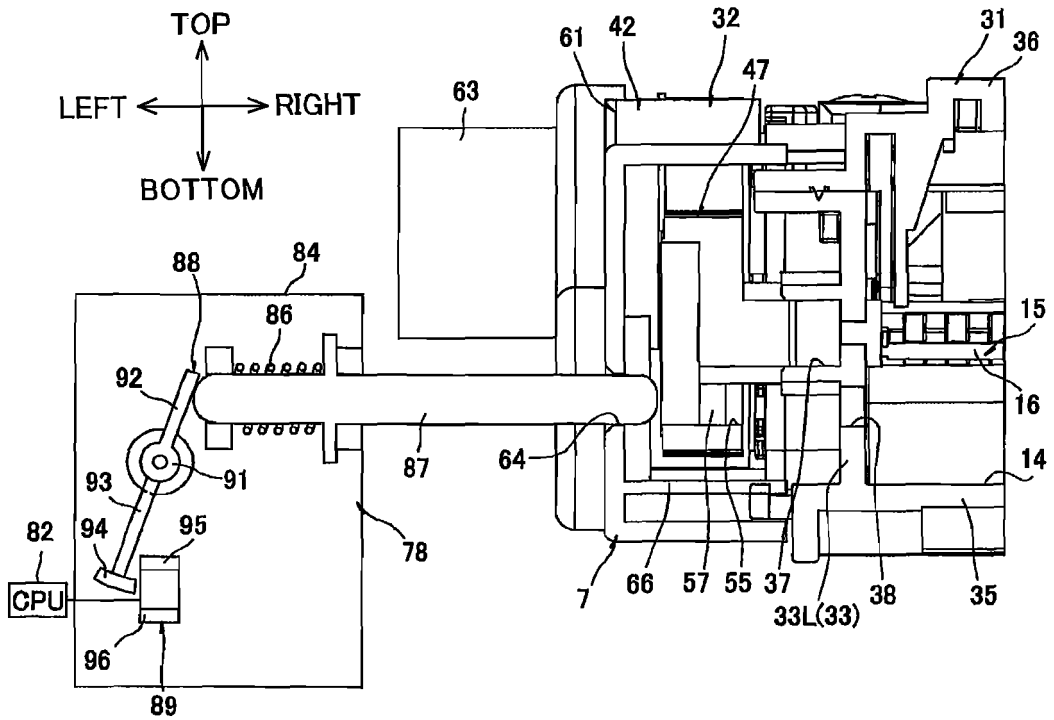


FIG.12A

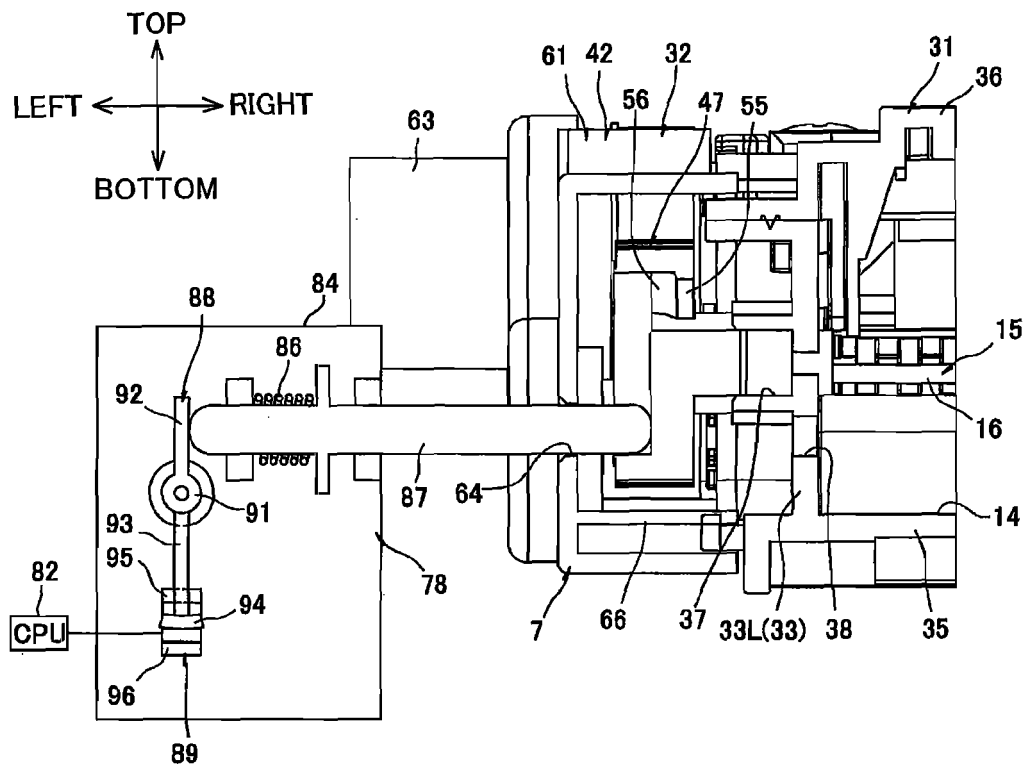


FIG.12B

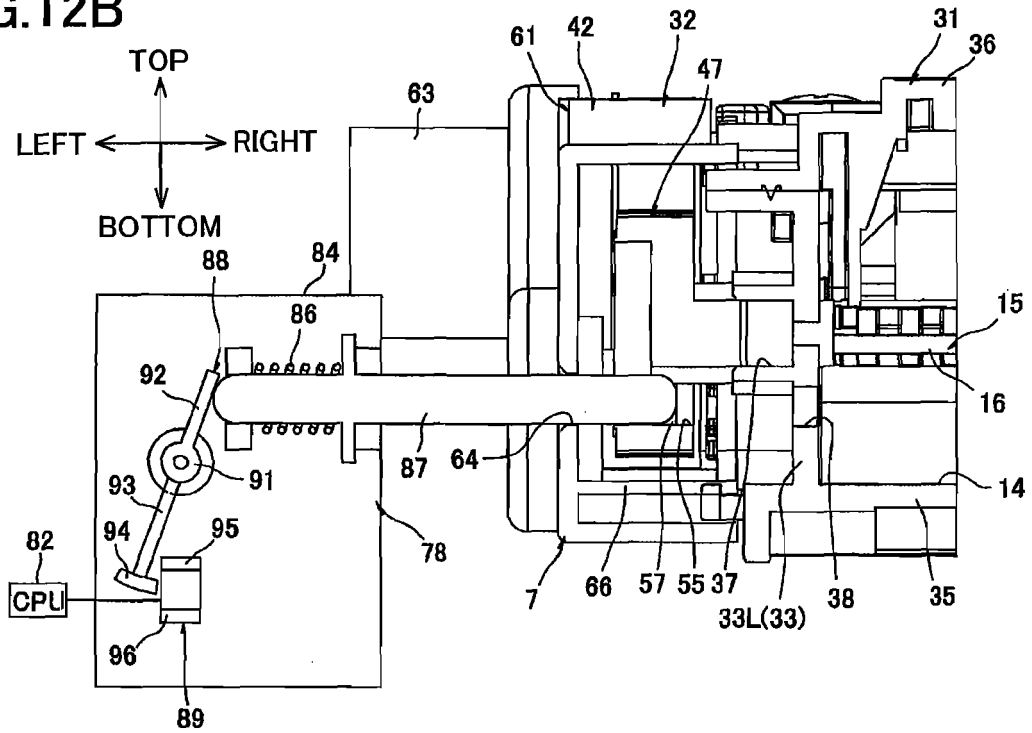


FIG.13A

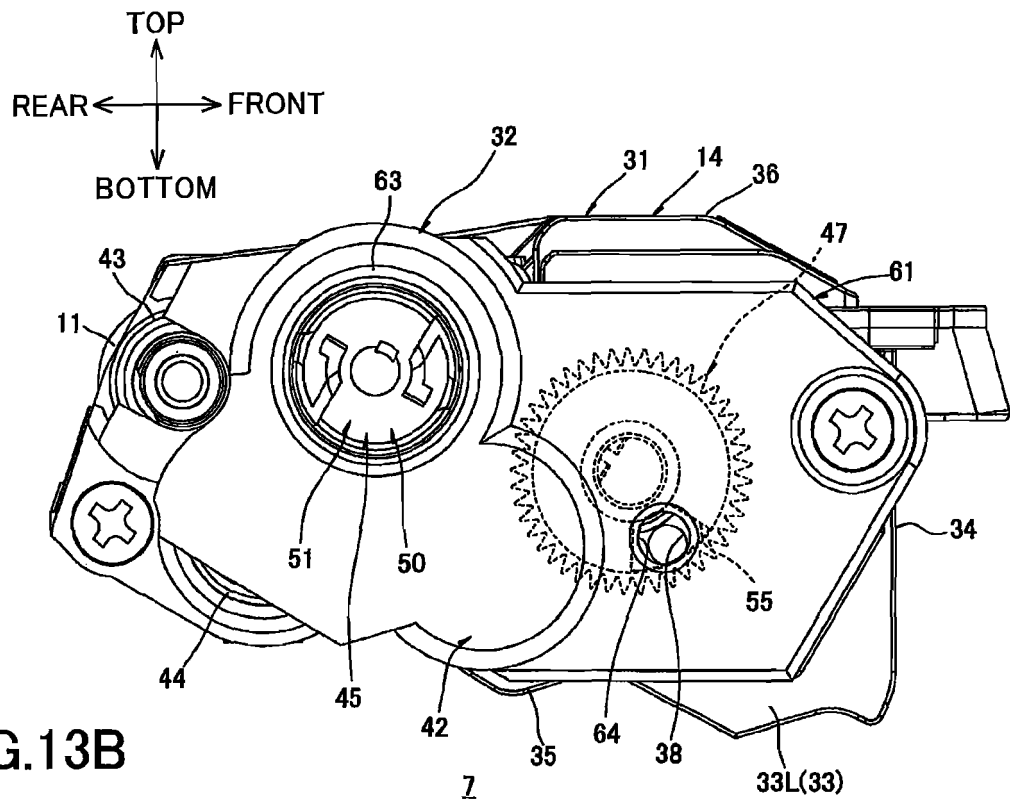


FIG.13B

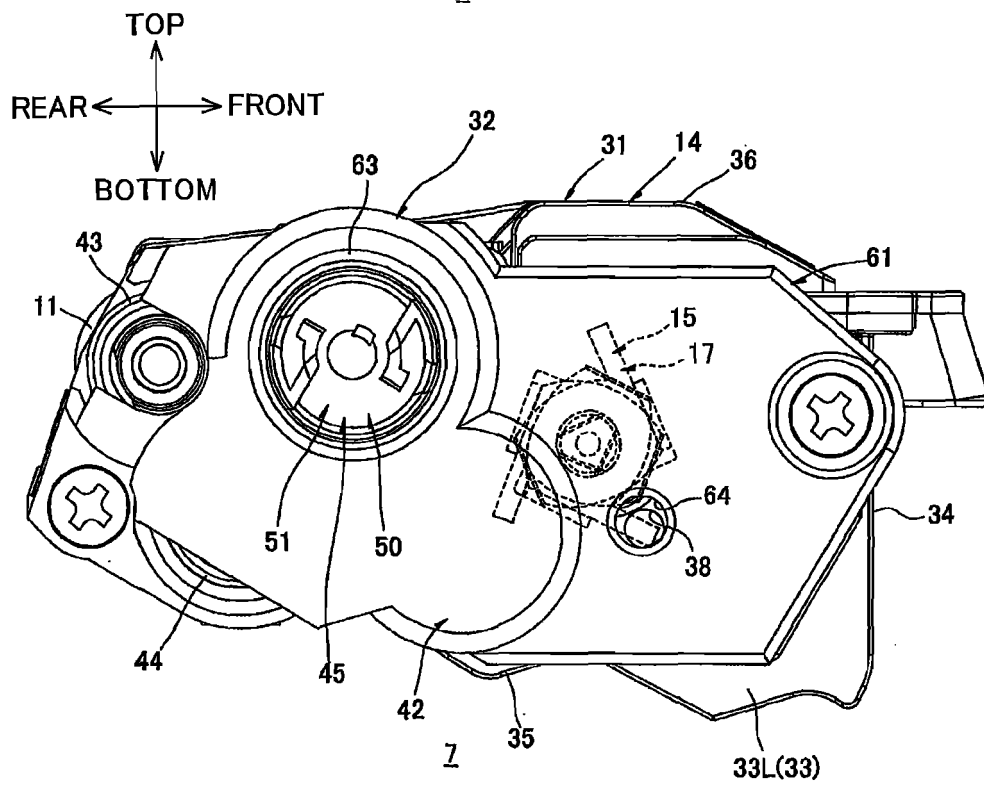


FIG.14A

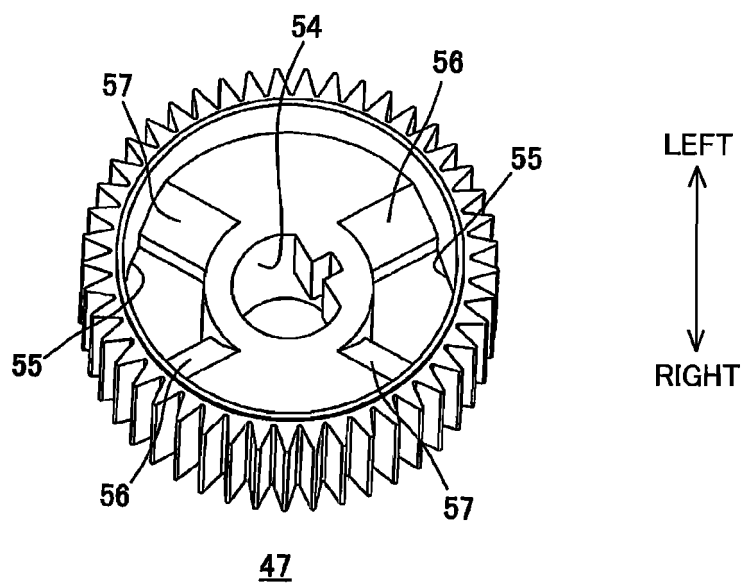
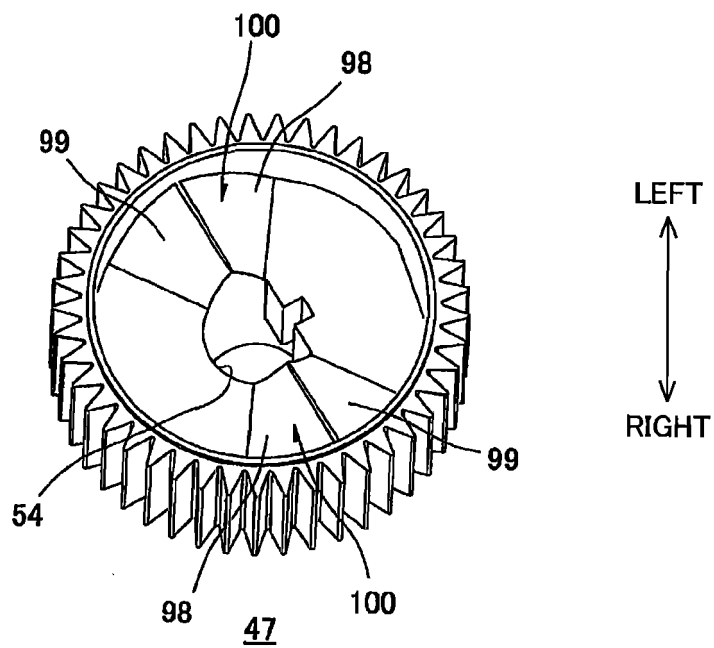


FIG.14B



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